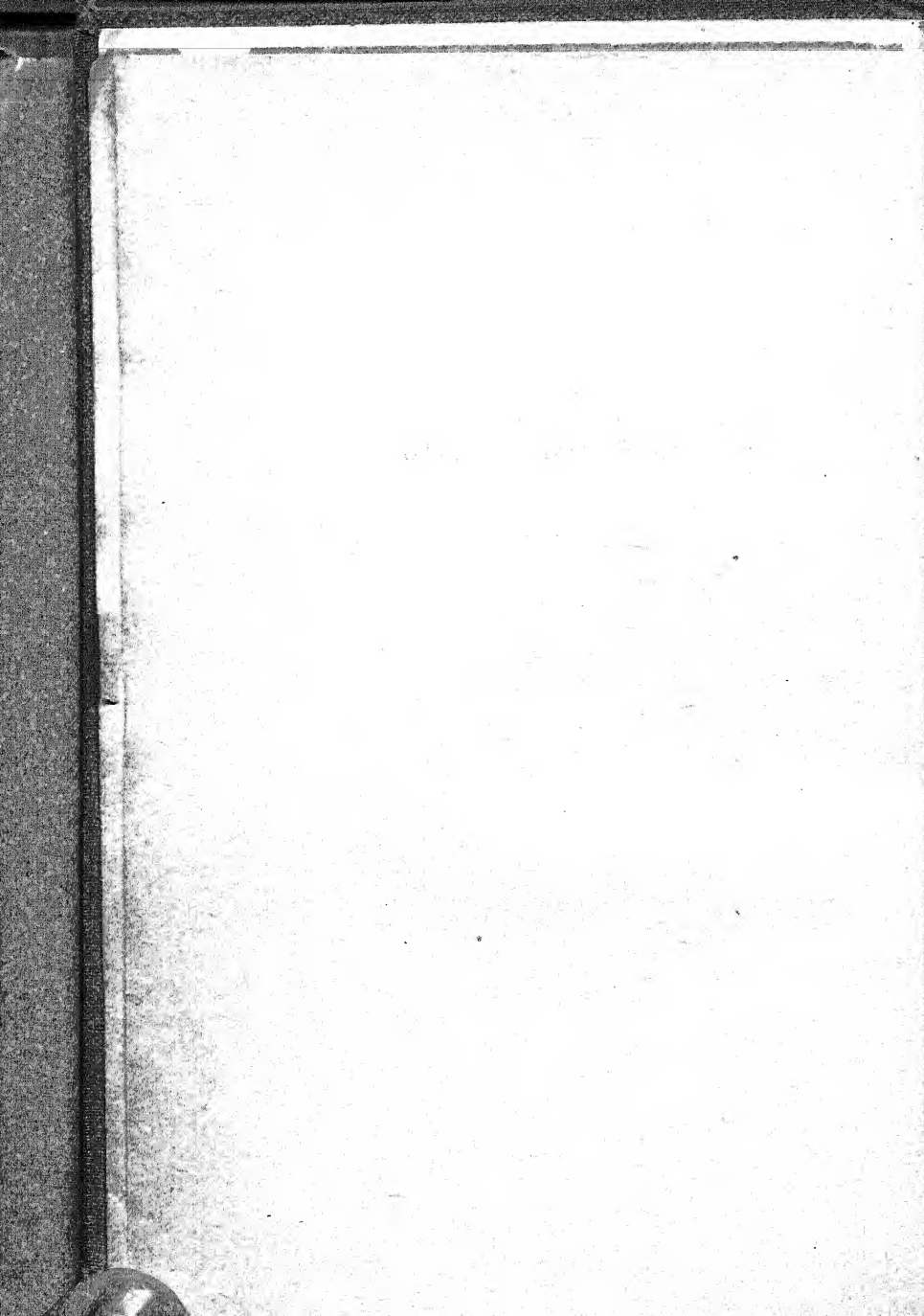


ASPECTS OF
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY VERSE



To
SACHEVERELL SITWELL



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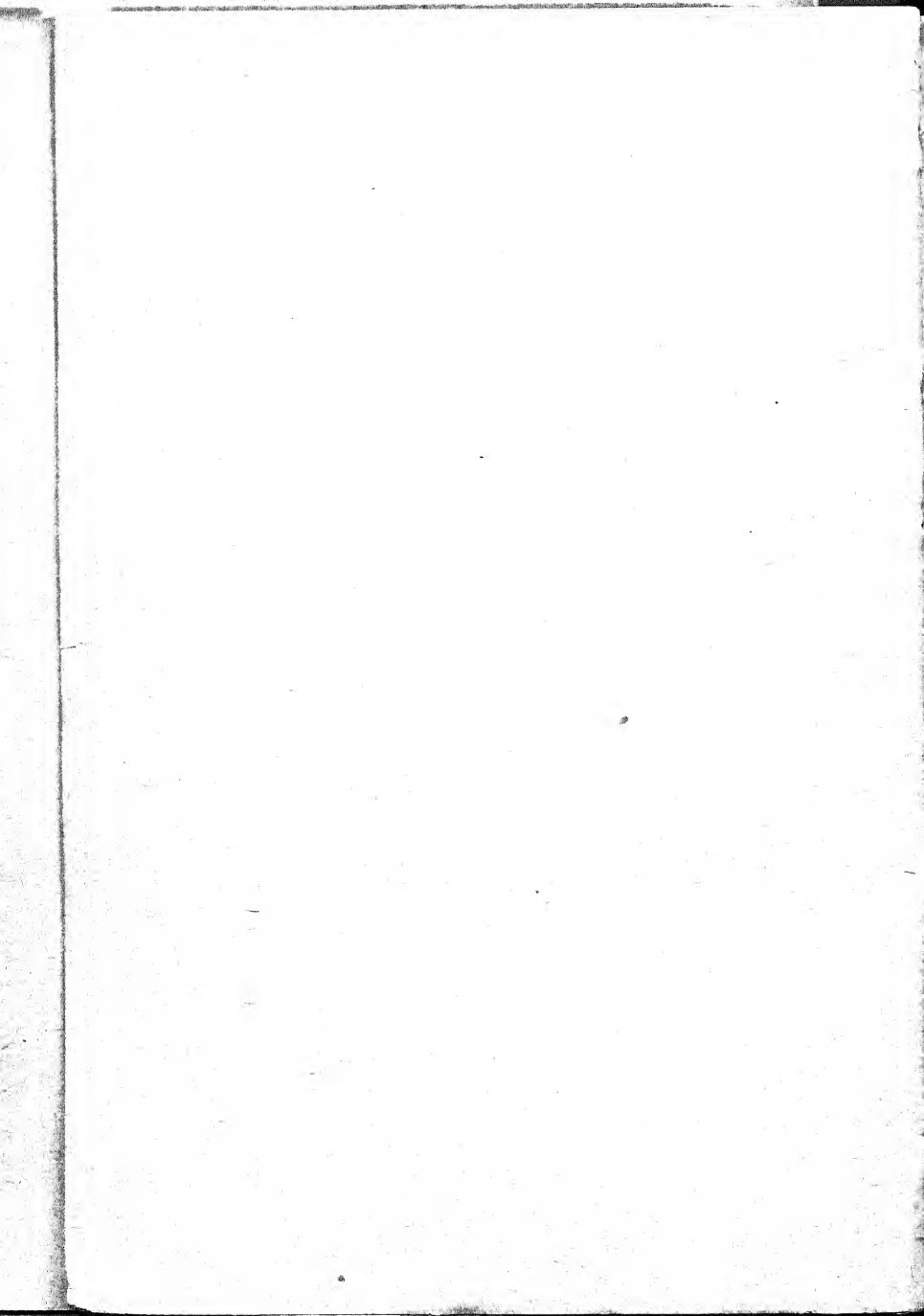
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Two admirable collections of seventeenth-century verse already exist—Mr. Norman Ault's and Mr. William Kerr's. For the purposes of the ordinary reader of poetry, these anthologies are apt to prove somewhat voluminous, since they include much that can only interest students and is of representative, rather than strictly æsthetic, importance. In putting together the material of the present book, I have done my best to include no single poem that does not possess genuine poetic quality.

Milton alone has been excluded. He stands solitary and gigantic among his contemporaries. He is not a poet whom one can afford to study piecemeal. He must be examined in his entirety, or passed by.

My thanks are due to the late Logan Pearsall-Smith, and to Mr. Hugh Macdonald and Mr. John Hayward, who helped me with advice or the loan of books.



INTRODUCTION

READERS are like travellers. Half the charm of reading or travelling is the opportunity it brings with it of regular and rapid change, of moving from landscape to landscape, and from period to period, of discovering echoes and contrasts among various forms of beauty. No doubt we can linger too long in any age or climate. Thus a moment may come when the Elizabethans pall—when their prodigious verbal artistry and the strange temperament that lies behind their extraordinary grasp of language seem progressively harder to reconcile the more assiduously we read them. Perhaps we turn for relief to the English Augustan poets; but in their work the cold sublimity of classical common sense baffles, though it also attracts, a reader of the present day. The nineteenth century is still too close to our own perplexing period; another twenty or thirty years and we may hope to see it plain.

The seventeenth century, on the other hand, opens to the modern explorer a surprising range of interests. It was a crowded time and, if we compare it with later epochs, offers us a great variety of choice, a sense of spirited movement in many fields. It bred poets; it also fostered the growth of divinity. There were sermon-writers, such as Donne and Jeremy Taylor, speaking to hushed crowds beneath the pulpit; great Puritans and masters of English prose, busy diarists, dilettanti and metaphysicians. Poetic drama was revived upon the stage, and a new and brilliant form of social comedy flowered from its heavier Jonsonian prototype. We feel that we have crossed the threshold of the modern world and catch a persistent echo of familiar voices.

Congreve's comedy is not so very far away; nor are the poetic experiments of Donne's youth,¹ ingenious, daring and often obscure, as remote from us as many nineteenth-century poems. We experience, no doubt, a kindred restlessness; and this *malaise*, so characteristic of a changing world, whether it originates in the spirit or in the body, and leans towards self-indulgence or self-withdrawal, runs through the whole of seventeenth-century verse. It was a period unbalanced yet full of energy, rocked by commotions much profounder than the Civil War.

First, the battle between the old and the new learning. Important discoveries were being made all over Europe; but, though Bacon in his mighty *Novum Organum* had helped to initiate the modern scientific method, there were many writers—as for instance Sir William Temple, Dorothy Osborne's husband and Swift's master—who brought their influence and erudition to the opposite camp, cultured sceptics who blandly dismissed the Royal Society and gravely demurred at the new-fangled Copernican system. "Natural philosophy" might be amusing, but it was hardly useful. The most that the human intelligence could hope to do was to determine a few classic rules of conduct, live "according to nature" and shun experiment:

*Man, dream no more of curious mysteries,
As what was here before the world was made,
The first man's life, the state of Paradise,
Where heaven is, or hell's eternal shade. . . .*

¹ Though we are told that the earliest, and perhaps the best, part of Donne's poetic achievement had been composed before 1600, he was so essentially a poet ahead of his time that I have ventured to include him in this collection.

*The Flood that did, and dreadful Fire that shall,
Drown and burn up the malice of the earth,
The divers tongues, and Babylon's downfall,
Are nothing to the man's renewèd birth.*

Fulke Greville was the author of those lines, an Elizabethan—at all events, in spirit, though he did not die till 1628—but their burden was often repeated by his literary descendants.

A sort of quietism, therefore, became the rule. Significant of this mood in seventeenth-century literature is the large number of garden-poems it produced. After a bitter taste of civil and mental strife, poets—Marvell and Cowley and many more—wrote lovingly of the ripened nectarines upon the wall, bursting plums jewelled with their own sweetness and huge cherries clustered thick among the leaves. "Wondrous life!" cried Marvell at Appleton House, while Cowley, in anacreontic measures, a literary gentleman taking his ease under a tree, asked mellifluously for wine and oil and a pretty cup-bearer.

How "literary", set beside the Elizabethans! It was during this period, as never before, that the literary personage emerged in a distinct type. Shakespeare, we know, was a man of all trades; Marlowe and Tourneur political spies; Jonson had gone campaigning in his youth. Cowley was a *littérateur* first and foremost, and his contemporaries, with one or two exceptions, were equally faithful to the calling they had adopted. They might be swept along by the demands of public business, but struggled back again to their self-elected task.

So the seventeenth century had its epicurean strain; Cowley whose cyrenaicism was a literary attitude, supported with much scholarship and some wit; Herrick, the voluptuous country parson, plump with Elizabethan milk and honey; as well as court-poets and libertines not a few. They make up the *hortus conclusus* of our period; yet even behind these high

espaliered ramparts we can distinguish the alarums and excursions of the real world which have found their way into the elegant mazes of Appleton House. Lord Fairfax's Dutch tulips on parade awake the recent memory of bloodshed and disorder:

*Unhappy! shall we never more
That sweet militia restore,
When gardens only had their towers
And all the garrisons were flowers;
When roses only arms might bear,
And men did rosy garlands wear?
Tulips, in several colours barred,
Were then the Switzers of our guard;
The gardener had the soldier's place,
And his more gentle forts did trace . . .
But war all this doth overgrow:
We ordnance plant and powder sow.*

Conflict was always in the background. I have mentioned the strife of the old and the new, and I must add to it a further source of perplexity. One has sometimes felt, when reading the Elizabethans, that they suffered from recurrent attacks of moral nausea, brought on by the excessive richness of their mental food. Half pagan and half Christian by upbringing, an Elizabethan knew the agonies that belong to both. The Devil, being sick, abjured love, regained his health and gave himself up to the sway of pleasure; but the Elizabethans, even at their most physical, retained a gloomy, almost rabid, fear of the flesh.

The seventeenth century rationalized this conflict. Love became platonic, introspective, and was made to bear the burdens of thought and fantasy, sometimes till it was on the

point of breaking down. The youthful Donne is cynical and voluptuous; yet he, too, as for instance in *The Ecstasy*, that wonderful and truly ecstatic piece of verse, discusses the interrelation of body and spirit in lines that possess a grave and ingenious charm:

*As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot which makes us man:
So must pure lovers' souls descend
T'affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great prince in prison lies.
To our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love revealed may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.*

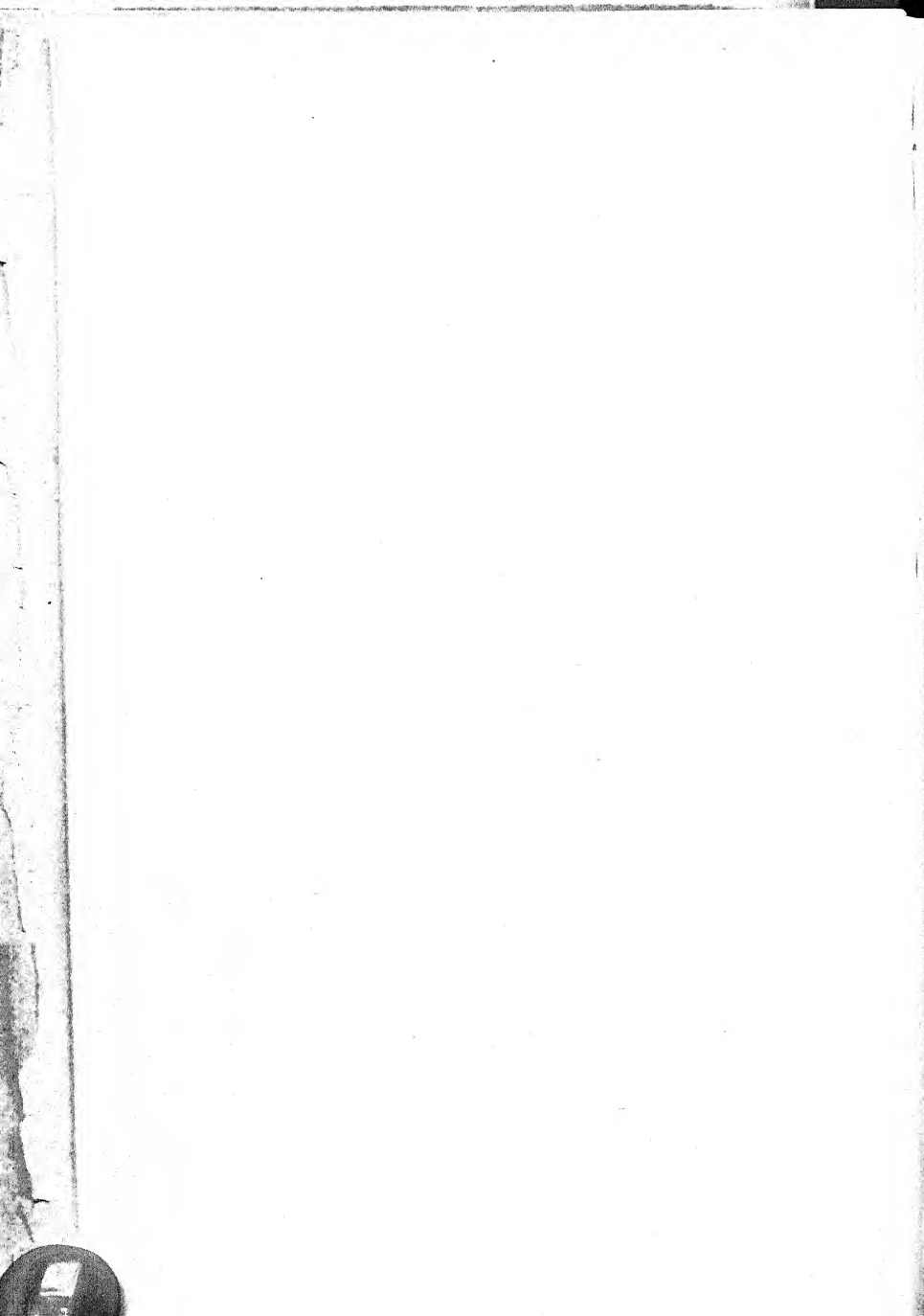
Plainly, flesh and spirit were interdependent. No moral or emotional violence must be allowed to part them; and their connexion is exemplified in contemporary verse by means of many scholarly and elaborate figures.

Deep emotion and pedantic utterance went hand in hand. We have grown accustomed, through much poring on Romantic literature, to think of the ideal poetic life as being compressed between drowning at sea and expulsion from Oxford, and of poetry as always intemperate, young and rash. It was otherwise under the first and second Charles; not only was the possession of poetic talent still compatible with academic honours, but modernism, as understood in the seventeenth century, was approved of and positively emulated by learned men. Nor did scholarship exclude wit and genuine

fire. Not until the dawn of the succeeding epoch had scholarship, and the canons of polite criticism, solidified into that oppressive armour of "taste" which it needed a Pope to wear with ease. There was yet licence for the freakish and unconventional; a whole host of secondary writers could gambol on the lower ranges of Parnassus and reap the lavish garlands of contemporary fame. The very extravagance with which they blundered is often alleviated by the happy boldness of their hit-or-miss.

They hit splendidly, missed ludicrously, again and again. No period has been more prolific of minor poets, and seldom has minor poetry been more readable. Of the poets represented in this book, I suppose that half a dozen at the very most might qualify for a place in the first rank or claim to have written a "great" poem. Here they will be found in the immediate neighbourhood of lesser luminaries. It is a curious fact that, unlike most other periods, the seventeenth century was an epoch of *diffused* talent. Genius, brilliantly concentrated in a handful of writers, was also liberally scattered among the many.

LYRICAL VERSE



FOREWORD

THOSE who enjoy classification, and revive for the purposes of literary argument the ingenuous pastimes of the nursery floor, with its tin soldiers drawn up in opposite camps, will relish, when they come to seventeenth-century literature, the opportunity of erecting two rival armies. On one side, the Metaphysical Poets . . . Cowley, who was born in 1618 and survived till 1677, may be allowed to pose at the head of the earlier group; while Dryden¹ who saw the beginning of the next century—he ushered it in with his beautiful *Secular Masque*—personifies the later dispensation.

He admired Cowley but deprecated his influence. Looking back to a still more remote past, we see Jonson as a representative of the Giant Age which had been superannuated by the encroachment of new fashions. He had praised, but cautiously distrusted, the innovators. Donne, he remarked in conversation with Drummond of Hawthornden, was "the first poet in the world, *in some things*", but "for not keeping of accent deserved hanging". We reverse the position and Dryden praises Cowley, but thinks him tedious, diffuse and incorrect.

Jonson and Dryden might have agreed. Between them stand a various group of writers who had edged away from Elizabethan models. Not a few of these poets, it should be remembered, had known Ben Jonson in his old age and, like Herrick and Randolph, sat at his feet. Jonson, none the less, was to vanish as a literary power; his ponderous Latinism was gradually to lose its spell; and the characteristics that had

¹ But it must be noted that Dryden in his youth did not escape the influence of Donne.

baffled him in Donne were to become the general property of the succeeding generation. For they, too, were complex and abstruse. Of the divergent strains in Elizabethan literature, one notices first of all its lyric naïvety, expressed in innumerable charming songs, then its erudite, pedantic, "conceited" side. It was this latter strain that the Carolines chiefly resumed. Their lyricism was no longer so uncomplicated; and just as Donne, an amorous and turbulent poet, whose love poems had an oddly speculative twist, developed into a strangely sensuous divine, their eroticism was apt to reveal an *arrière-pensée* and their religious musings to employ the images of human passion.

They wrote of desire like philosophers or ecstatic priests, of God like epigrammatists or human lovers; and the quality of well-timed unexpectedness was not infrequently cultivated for its own sake. Thus the Metaphysical Poets at their best and worst. . . . My aim, however, in making this anthology has been to separate "metaphysical" verse from the slighter and lighter products of the same period, and to show them as independent, though parallel, branches. Simplicity and clarity were yet to be found. True, many poems that I have grouped under the heading "lyrical" have more than a touch of "metaphysical" conceit; and few, or none, of them could ever be mistaken for the work of an Elizabethan song-writer.

Everywhere the age that fostered them has left its mark. I propose to discuss in a later section the idiosyncrasies of the Metaphysical School; but meanwhile the closing lines of a famous paragraph may help to throw some light on their common background. "Their attempts," austere thunders Dr. Johnson, describing Cowley and other Metaphysical Poets, "were always analytic; they broke every image into fragments, and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature or the scenes of life, than he, who dissects a sunbeam with a prism, can

exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon." The final metaphor was used in a derogatory sense, but, now that our point of view has changed, it is eulogistic. For the modern reader, that exquisite prismatic colouring is one of the rare beauties of seventeenth-century verse.

We have learned to appreciate the analytic method. Poem follows poem; and, though in some of them the speculative turn is forced—the poet, we realise, is obeying a mode, not satisfying a genuinely inquisitive impulse—we get an impression of absorbing curiosity, of intelligences that range abroad through many fields. They veer from flesh to spirit, from mind to body. Some love poets cut out their lyrics to a stock pattern; but others ransack experience with feverish zeal. Like Donne, they delve deep into "love's mine", using the sharpened tools of analogy and metaphor. And then, they share a rather hectic exaltation. As one traverses the earlier decades of the period, one notices how the Elizabethan lyrical impetus, so evident in the song-books and the dramas, is transformed but by no means dies away. Take, for example, the poems of Sir John Davenant. His well-known aubade, "*The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest . . .*" is virtually Elizabethan in spirit. Elizabethan, too—though with a difference—is Davenant's superb *To a Mistress Dying*; while his longer poems contain learned and elaborate imagery redolent of a more pensive and prosaic age.

Davenant is a fine poet at his most accomplished. The legend that this heir of an Oxford innkeeper was the son of our greatest dramatic poet is worth remembering, even though unfounded. A delicate sensuality colours his verse; but it is not the sensuous rapture of an earlier time, being more sophisticated, both in its origin and its effect. Davenant can evoke an impression of great magnificence by the solemn music of carefully marshalled lines:

*Your beauty, ripe and calm and fresh
As eastern summers are . . .*

—which, like certain passages of Herman Melville's prose, suffuse the imagination with a mellow warmth—but he has also, even to the point of over-refinement, a keen sensitiveness to the more attenuated niceties.

In this respect he is characteristic of his time. The pleasures derived from touch and scent and taste, above all the delights that are derived from sound, form the stock-in-trade of seventeenth-century versifying. Never were poets more voluptuously on the qui vive:

Soft, as the hands of Love, smooth as her brow . . .

writes Davenant of a dead youth, "B. Haselrick, slain in's youth, in a Duel".

. . . Such whites as these—

remarks Herrick, celebrating the whiteness of Electra—

*May me delight, not fully please:
Till like Ixion's cloud you be
White, warm and soft to lie with me.*

No other poet, so far as I am aware, has seen the exquisite and softly pleasurable side of Ixion's disappointment; and it is typical of the period in which he wrote that Herrick should have grasped it so boldly and so happily.

Music is a constant preoccupation. Both Milton and Dryden, in verses too famous for me to quote, described its extraordinary power on the human mind, its varied sweetness and poignancy,

its majestic hubbub; while many poets, whose names are hardly known, wrote with moving eloquence of its mysterious spell:

*O lull me, lull me, charming air,
My senses rock with wonder sweet;
Like snow on wool thy fallings are,
Soft, like a spirit's, are thy feet . . .*

The sentiment is rarified, yet it remains concise: *like snow on wool . . . soft, like a spirit's*. Just that fusion of the extremely elusive with a very definite, almost mathematical, basic scheme, which makes music the despair and envy of poets, gave it the prominent place it then enjoyed. It appealed to all that was ecstatic in the soul of the period, with the added stimulus of intellectual curiosity.

Over-indulged, such æstheticism may become tedious. Here and there, as in Oldham's lines on a deceased friend—part of a long and diffuse elegy, though usually printed to form a separate poem—delicacy seems to have over-reached itself:

*Thy soul within such silent pomp did keep,
As if humanity were lulled asleep;
So gentle was thy pilgrimage beneath,
Time's unheard feet scarce make less noise,
Or the soft journey which a planet goes . . .*

producing an effect of nebulous indistinctness. Then it is pleasant to turn to Cotton or William Cartwright, in whose verse the physical world still beams and glows.

Cartwright was a brilliant but unequal poet. His *Song of Dalliance*, reprinted in this volume and too little known by the ordinary reader, is erotic verse at its most exuberant and un-

ashamed. He was not, as one might suppose, an urban libertine, at home among the playhouses and London brothels; rather a cultured and fastidious Oxford pedant. He was, indeed—to transcribe a contemporary appreciation—"the most florid and seraphical preacher in the University"; and that he had alternated, or at all events seen fit to preface, his academic and theological studies with some research into the cause and effect of human love did but increase the charm of his divine persuasion. Church-going, were there a Cartwright still alive, might once again become an intellectual pastime. . . .

Our intellectuals might learn to fish, had we a Cotton. A country gentleman, much hunted by importunate duns—he used to take refuge from them in a cave, a natural grotto somewhere in his park—Charles Cotton's celebrity has been overshadowed by his friendship with the author of *The Compleat Angler*. But he was a poet who scored an occasional triumph. Nothing could be better in its way than his *Resolution of a Poetical Question Concerning Four Rural Sisters*; while his *Night Quatrains* have a Shakespearean solidity, beyond the reach of the etiolated modern muse.

For the seventeenth century had its prosaic aspect. It excelled in exact trenchant description, and had developed a taste for the variegated and the picturesque. A writer as obscure as Flatman—or as famous as Donne—will intersperse passages of sustained solemnity with touches of conversational ease that set our feet firmly upon the earth; the poet may be a visionary and a seer, yet fundamentally and redeemingly matter-of-fact.

For it was a period that produced men of the world. Mundane sagacity, as we approach its sixth decade when bells were ringing at the Restoration of Charles II—himself *homme du monde* in the better and worse sense—begins to oust the erratic enthusiasms with which it had opened and prepare

the way for an era of classic rectitude. Dryden typifies the change. I have already suggested that his criticism of his immediate predecessors might be compared to Jonson's attitude towards those who followed him; and, like Jonson, he is more acceptable in his own work than as an arbiter of contemporary poetic modes.

His influence on English verse was somewhat deadening. Dryden might give precepts to his age, but he could not hand down the secret of his consummate skill and remained a law-giver and literary pontiff first and foremost. At second hand, his methods are merely dull. His magnificent resuscitation of blank verse, his splendid, copious, vitriolic satire are, of course, outside the province of this book. I have confined myself to the *Song for St. Cecilia's Day* and a selection of the shorter lyric pieces.

Dryden's songs are lyric verse *en robe de parade*. They are the antithesis of their Elizabethan counterparts, differing from them in quality and in effect as operatic airs from snatches of folk-tune. They are none the less supremely and movingly musical; great flexibility of rhythm is accompanied by a certain air of sumptuous stiffness; their texture sometimes recalls a brocaded fabric, heavily ornamented and yet supple to the touch.

His flexibility could never be recaptured. Variety, flexibility, charm, are characteristic of the earlier decades of the seventeenth century while enthusiasm and irregularity were rife, but become rare as it draws towards its close. Rochester, a neurotic Don Juan who produced one or two beautiful songs, oddly personal in spite of their conventional dress, bade his vituperative *Farewell* in 1680:

*Tired with the noisome follies of the age,
And wearied of my part, I quit the stage;
For who in life's dull farce a part would bear,
Where rogues, whores, bawds, all the head actors are?*

—but Sir Charles Sedley, that singularly vapid poetaster, survived him by more than twenty years. Imagination in Sedley's poems is as scarce as music. Even his best-known and most successful effort

*Ah, Chloris! that I now could sit
As unconcerned as when
Your infant beauty could beget
No pleasure, nor no pain . . .*

dies away on a note of smooth banality that foreshadows the jaunty commonplace of Matthew Prior.

Herrick had died in 1674, Marvell in 1678, and, with their disappearance from the scene, lyric verse grows increasingly correct and colourless. Stock imagery now deputizes for poetic invention. Hereafter, what pleases in such work are less bold and individual strokes of fancy (the sudden and brilliant lightning of a poet's mind) than the cultured conformity expressed by its outward polish. Lady Winchilsea belongs to a different world and seems to herald the Romantic false-dawn of the eighteenth century.

ON LYDIA DISTRACTED

A Sonnet

WITH hairs, which for the wind to play with, hung,
With her torn garments, and with naked feet,
Fair Lydia dancing went from street to street,
Singing with pleasant voice her foolish song.

On her she drew all eyes in every place,
And them to pity by her pranks did move,
Which turned with gazing longer into love
By the rare beauty of her charming face.

In all her frenzies, and her mimicries,
While she did Nature's richest gifts despise,
There active love did subtly play his part.

Her antic postures made her look more gay,
Her ragged clothes her treasures did display,
And with each motion she ensnared a heart.

SONG *from* LYCIDUS

A THOUSAND martyrs I have made,
All sacrificed to my desire;
A thousand beauties have betrayed,
That languish in resistless fire.
The untamed heart to hand I brought,
And fixed the wild and wandering thought.

I never vowed nor sighed in vain,
But both, though false, were well received.
The fair are pleased to give us pain,
And what they wish is soon believed.
And tho' I talked of wounds and smart,
Love's pleasures only touched my heart.

Alone the glory and the spoil
I always laughing bore away;
The triumphs, without pain or toil,
Without the hell, the heaven of joy.
And while I thus at random rove
Despise the fools that whine for love.

TO HIS MISTRESS

WHAT a dull fool was I,
To think so gross a lie,
As that I ever was in love before!
I have, perhaps, known one or two
With whom I was content to be
At that, which they call "Keeping company".
But, after all that they could do,
I still could be with more.
Their absence never made me shed a tear;
And I can truly swear,
That, till my eyes first gazed on you,
I ne'er beheld the thing I could adore.

A world of things must curiously be sought,
A world of things must be together brought,
To make up charms which have the power to move,
Through a discerning eye, true love.
That is a masterpiece above
What only looks and shape can do;
There must be wit, and judgment too;
Greatness of thought, and worth, which draw
From the whole world respect and awe.

She that would raise a noble love, must find
Ways to beget a passion for her mind,
She must be that, which she to be would seem,
For all true love is grounded on esteem.

Plainness and truth gain more a generous heart
Than all the crooked subtleties of art.

She must be (what said I?) She must be you.

None but yourself that miracle can do;

At least, I'm sure, thus much I plainly see,

None but yourself e'er did it upon me.

'Tis you alone, that can my heart subdue—

To you alone, it always shall be true!

ASK ME NO MORE

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauties' orient deep,
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more where those stars light
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixèd become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more if east or west
The phoenix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

SONG OF DALLIANCE

HARK, my Flora! Love doth call us
To that strife that must befall us.
He hath robbed his mother's myrtles
And hath pulled her downy turtles.

See, our genial posts are crowned,
And our beds like billows rise:
Softer lists are nowhere found,
And the strife's itself the prize.

Let not dark nor shadows fright thee;
Thy limbs of lustre they will light thee.
Fear not any can surprise us,
Love himself doth now disguise us.
From thy waist the girdle throw:
Night and darkness both dwell here:
Words or actions who can know,
Where there's neither eye nor ear?

Show thy bosom and then hide it;
Licence touching and then chide it;
Give a grant and then forbear it,
Offer something and forswear it;
Ask where all our shame is gone;
Call us wicked wanton men;
Do as turtles, kiss and groan;
Say "thou ne'er shalt joy again".

I can hear thee curse, yet chase thee;
Drink thy tears, yet still embrace thee;
Easy riches is no treasure;
She that's willing spoils the pleasure.
Love bids learn the wrestlers' fight;
Pull and struggle when we twine;
Let me use my force to-night,
The next conquest shall be thine.

WOMEN

GIVE me a girl (if one I needs must meet)
Or in her nuptial, or her winding sheet:
I know but two good hours that women have,
One in the bed, another in the grave.
Thus of the whole sex all I would desire
Is to enjoy their ashes, or their fire.

SONG *from* THE SIEGE

SEAL up her eyes, O Sleep, but flow
Mild as her manners, to and fro;
Slide soft into her, that yet she
May receive no wound from thee.

And ye present her thoughts, O Dreams,
With hushing winds and purling streams,
Whiles hovering silence sits without,
Careful to keep disturbance out.
Thus seize her, Sleep, thus her again resign;
So what was Heaven's gift we'll reckon thine.

HALLO! MY FANCY

IN conceit like Phaeton
I'll mount Phoebus' chair;
Having ne'er a hat on
All my hair's a-burning
In my journeying,
Hurrying through the air;
Fain would I hear his fiery horses neighing;
And see how they on foamy bits are playing;
All the stars and planets I will be surveying.
Hallo! my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

Oh, from what ground of nature
Doth the pelican,
That self-devouring creature
Prove so froward
And toward
Her vitals for to restrain!
And why the subtle fox, while in death-wounds is lying,
Doth not lament his pangs, by howling and by crying:
And why the milk-white swan doth sing when she's a-dying.
Hallo! my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

Fain would I conclude this—
At least make an essay,
What similitude is
Why fowls of a feather
Do flock and fly together,
And lambs know beasts of prey;
How nature's alchemists, these small laborious creatures,
Acknowledge still a prince in ordering their matters,
And suffers none to live, who slothing lose their features.
Hallo! my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

I'm rapt with admiration,
When I do ruminate
Men of one occupation,
How each one calls him brother,
Yet each envieth other,
And yet still imitate;

Yea, I admire to see, some natives farther sundered
Than Antipodes to us, is it not to be wondered
In myriads ye'll find of one mind scarce an hundred.
Hallo! my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

What multitude of notions
Doth perturb my pate,
Considering the motions
How heavens they are preserved
And this world served
In moisture, light, and heat:

If one spirit sits the outmost circle turning,
Or if one turns another, continuing in journeying;
If rapid circle's motion be that which they call burning.
Hallo! my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

Fain also would I prove
This, by considering,
What that which you call love is;
Whether it be a folly,
Or a melancholy,
Or some heroic thing;

Fain would I have it proved, by one whom love hath wounded
And fully upon one their desire hath founded,
That nothing else could please them, tho' the world be rounded.
Hallo, my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

To know this world's centre,
Height, depth, breadth, and length,
Fain would I adventure,
To search the hid attractions
Of magnetic actions
And adamatick strength.

Fain would I know if in some lofty mountain,
Where the moon sojourns, if there be trees or fountain,
If there be beasts of prey, or yet fields to hunt in.
Hallo! my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

Fain would I have it tried
By experiments
By none can be denied,
If in this bulk of nature
There be voids less or greater
Or all remains complete.

Fain would I know if beasts have any reason;
If falcons killing eagles do commit a treason;
If fear of winter's want, makes swallow fly the season.
Hallo, my Fancy, whither wilt thou go?

Hallo, my Fancy, Hallo!
Stay thou at home with me,
I can thee no longer follow,
Thou hast betrayed me
And bewrayed me,
It is too much for thee.

Stay, stay at home with me, leave off thy lofty soaring;
Stay thou at home with me, and on thy books be poring,
For he that goes abroad, lays little up in storing;
Thou's welcome home, my Fancy,
Welcome home to me!

WHEN AS THE NIGHTINGALE

WHEN as the nightingale chanted her vespers,
And the wild forester couched on the ground,
Venus invited me in the evening whispers
Unto a fragrant field with roses crowned,
Where she before had sent
My wishes' complement,
Unto my heart's content
Played with me on the green.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

First on her cherry cheeks I mine eyes feasted,
Thence fear of surfeiting made me retire;
Next on her warmer lips, which when I tasted,
My duller spirits made active as fire.
Then we began to dart,
Each at another's heart,
Arrows that knew no smart,
Sweet lips and smiles between.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

Wanting a glass to plait her amber tresses
Which like a bracelet rich deckèd mine arm,
Gaudier than Juno wears when as she graces
Jove with embraces more stately than warm;

Then did she peep in mine
Eyes' humour crystalline;
I in her eyes was seen
As if we one had been.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

Mystical grammar of amorous glances;
Feeling of pulses, the physic of love;
Rhetorical courtings and musical dances;
Numb'ring of kisses arithmetic prove;
Eyes like astronomy;
Straight-limbed geometry;
In her art's ingeny
Our wits were sharp and keen.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

RESOLUTION IN FOUR SONNETS

*Of a Poetical Question put to me by a
Friend, concerning Four Rural Sisters*

I

ALICE is tall and upright as a pine,
White as blanch'd almonds, or the falling snow,
Sweet as are damask roses when they blow,
And doubtless fruitful as the swelling vine.

Ripe to be cut, and ready to be pressed,
Her full-cheek'd beauties very well appear;
And a year's fruit she loses every year,
Wanting a man t'improve her to the best.

Full fain she would be husbanded, and yet,
Alas! she cannot a fit labourer get
To cultivate her to her own content:

Fain would she be (God wot) about her task,
And yet (forsooth) she is too proud to ask,
And (which is worse) too modest to consent.

II

Margaret of humbler stature by the head
Is (as it oft falls out with yellow hair)
Than her fair sister, yet so much more fair,
As her pure white is better mixed with red.

This, hotter than the other ten to one,
Longs to be put unto her mother's trade,
And loud proclaims she lives too long a maid,
Wishing for one t'untie her virgin zone.

She finds virginity a kind of ware
That's very very troublesome to bear,
And being gone, she thinks will ne'er be missed;

And yet withal, the girl has so much grace,
To call for help I know she wants the face,
Though asked, I know not how she would resist.

III

Mary is black, and taller than the last,
Yet equal in perfection and desire,
To the one's melting snow, and t'other's fire,
As with whose black their fairness is defaced.

She pants as much for love as th'other two,
But she so virtuous is, or else so wise,
That she will win (or will not love) a prize,
And but upon good terms will never do:

Therefore who will her conquer ought to be
At least as full of love and wit as she,
Or he shall ne'er gain favour at her hands;

Nay, though he have a pretty store of brains,
Shall only have his labour for his pains,
Unless he offer more than she demands.

IV

Martha is not so tall, nor yet so fair
As any of the other lovely three,
Her chiefest grace is poor simplicity;
Yet were the rest away, she were a star.

She's fair enough, only she wants the art
To set her beauties off as they can do,
And that's the cause she ne'er heard any woo,
Nor ever yet made conquest of a heart:

And yet her blood's as boiling as the rest,
Which, pretty soul, does so disturb her rest,
And makes her languish so, she's fit to die.

Poor thing, I doubt she still must lie alone,
For being like to be attacked by none,
She's no more wit to ask than to deny.

From NIGHT QUATRAINS

. . . NYCTMINE now freed from day,
From sullen bush flies out to prey,
And does with ferret note proclaim
Th'arrival of th'usurping Dame.

The rail now crakes in fields and meads,
Toads now forsake the nettle-beds,
The tim'rous hare goes to relief,
And wary men bolt out the thief.

The fire's new raked, and hearth swept clean
By Madge, the dirty kitchen-quean,
The safe is locked, the mouse-trap set,
The leaven laid, and bucking wet.

Now in false floors and roofs above,
The lustful cats make ill-tuned love,
The ban-dog on the dunghill lies,
And watchful nurse sings lullabies.

Philomel chants it whilst she bleeds,
The bittern booms it in the reeds,
And Reynard entering the back yard,
The Capitolian cry is heard.

The goblin now the fool alarms,
Hags meet to mumble o'er their charms;
The night-mare rides the dreaming ass,
And fairies trip it on the grass.

The drunkard now supinely snores,
His load of ale sweats through his pores,
Yet when he wakes the swine shall find
A crapula remains behind.

The sober now and chaste are blest
With sweet, and with refreshing rest,
And to sound sleeps they've best pretence,
Have greatest share of innocence.

We should so live then that we may
Fearless put off our clouts and clay,
And travel through death's shades to light;
For every day must have its night.

THE FALL

CELIA, my fairest Celia, fell,
Celia, than the fairest, fairer;
Celia, with none I must compare her
That all alone is all in all,
Of what we fair and modest call;
Celia, white as alabaster,
Celia, than Diana chaster;
This fair, fair Celia, grief to tell,
This fair, this modest chaste one, fell.

My Celia, sweetest Celia, fell
As I have seen a snow-white dove
Decline her bosom from above,
And down her spotless body fling
Without the motion of the wing,
Till she arrest her seeming fall
Upon some happy pedestal:
So soft, this sweet I love so well,
This sweet, this dove-like Celia, fell.

Celia, my dearest Celia, fell
As I have seen a melting star
Drop down its fire from its sphere,
Rescuing so its glorious sight
From that paler snuff of light;
Yet is a star bright and entire,
As when 'twas wrapt in all that fire:
So bright, this dear I love so well,
This dear, this star-like Celia, fell.

And yet my Celia did not fall
As grosser earthly mortals do,
But stooped, like Phoebus, to renew
Her lustre by her morning rise,
And dart new beauties in the skies,
Like a white dove, she took her flight,
And, like a star, she shot her light:
This dove, this star, so loved of all,
My fair, dear, sweetest, did not fall.

But, if you'll say my Celia fell,
Of this I'm sure, that, like the dart
Of Love it was, and on my heart;
Poor heart, alas! wounded before,
She needed not have hurt it more:
So absolute a conquest she
Had gained before of it, and me,
That neither of us have been well
Before, or since my Celia fell.

THE CHANGE

Love in her sunny eyes does basking play;
Love walks the pleasant mazes of her hair;
Love does on both her lips for ever stray;
And sows and reaps a thousand kisses there.
In all her outward parts Love's always seen;
But oh, he never went within.

Within Love's foes, his greatest foes abide,
Malice, Inconstancy, and Pride.
So the earth's face, trees, herbs, and flowers do dress,
With other beauties numberless:
But at the centre, darkness is, and hell;
There wicked spirits, and there the damnèd dwell.

With me alas, quite contrary it fares;
Darkness and Death lies in my weeping eyes,
Despair and Paleness in my face appears,
And grief, and Fear, Love's greatest enemies;
But, like the Persian tyrant, Love within
Keeps his proud court, and ne'er is seen. . . .

THE GRASSHOPPER

HAPPY insect, what can be
In happiness compared to thee?
Fed with nourishment divine,
The dewy morning's gentle wine!
Nature waits upon thee still,
And thy verdant cup does fill;

'Tis filled wherever thou dost tread,
Nature self's thy Ganymede.
Thou dost drink and dance and sing,
Happier than the happiest king!
All the fields which thou dost see,
All the plants, belong to thee,
All that summer hours produce,
Fertile made with early juice.
Man for thee does sow and plow
Farmer he, and landlord thou!
Thou dost innocently joy,
Nor does thy luxury destroy;
The shepherd gladly heareth thee,
More harmonious than he.
Thee country hinds with gladness hear.
Prophet of the ripened year!
Thee Phoebus loves and does inspire;
Phoebus is himself thy sire.
To thee of all things upon earth
Life is no longer than thy mirth.
Happy insect, happy thou,
Dost neither age nor winter know.
But when thou'st drunk and danced and sung
Thy fill the flowery leaves among,
Voluptuous and wise withal,
Epicurean animal,
Sated with thy summer feast,
Thou retirest to endless rest.

TO A MISTRESS DYING

Lover:

YOUR beauty, ripe and calm and fresh
As eastern summers are,
Must now, forsaking time and flesh,
Add light to some small star.

Philosopher:

Whilst she yet lives, were stars decayed,
Their light by hers relief might find;
But Death will lead her to a shade
Where Love is cold and Beauty blind.

Lover:

Lovers, whose priests all poets are,
Think every mistress, when she dies,
Is changed at least into a star,
And who dares doubt the poets wise?

Philosopher:

But ask not bodies doomed to die
To what abode they go;
Since Knowledge is but Sorrow's spy,
It is not safe to know.

FOR THE LADY OLIVIA PORTER¹*A Present upon a New Year's Day*

Go! hunt the whiter ermine! and present
His wealthy skin, as this day's tribute sent
To my Endymion's Love; though she be far
More gently smooth, more soft than ermines are!
Go! climb that rock! and when thou there hast found
A star, contracted in a diamond,
Give it Endymion's Love, whose glorious eyes
Darken the starry jewels of the skies!
Go! dive into the Southern Sea! and when
Th'ast found (to trouble the nice sight of men)
A swelling pearl; and such whose single worth
Boasts all the wonders which the seas bring forth;
Give it Endymion's Love! whose every tear
Would more enrich the skilful jeweller.
How I command! How slowly they obey!
The churlish Tartar will not hunt to-day:
Nor will that lazy sallow Indian strive
To climb the rock, nor that dull Negro dive.
Thus poets like to kings (by trust deceived)
Give oftener what is heard of, than received.

¹ Wife of Endymion Porter, Herrick's friend.

TO THE QUEEN

Entertained at Night by the Countess of Anglesea

FAIR as unshaded light; or as the day
In its first birth, when all the year was May;
Sweet as the altar's smoke, or as the new
Unfolded bud, swelled by the early dew;
Smooth as the face of waters first appeared,
Ere tides began to strive, or winds were heard;
Kind as the willing saints, and calmer far
Than in their sleeps forgiven hermits are;
You that are more, than our discreeter fear
Dares praise, with such full art, what make you here?
Here, where the summer is so little seen,
That leaves (her cheapest wealth) scarce reach at green,
You come, as if the silver planet were
Misled a while from her much injured sphere,
And t'ease the travails of her beams to-night
In this small lanthorn would contract her light.

THE MISTRESS

WHEN Nature heard men thought her old,
Her skill in beauteous forms decayed,
Her eyes grown dim, and fingers cold,
Then to her Poet thus she said:

Catch as it falls the Scythian snow;
Bring blushing roses steeped in milk;
From early meadows scent and show,
And from the Persian worm her silk.

Fetch from the East the morning's breath,
And from the Phoenix gums and spice,
Such as she calls, when at her death
The world does smell her sacrifice.

Nature of these a mistress made,
But would have formed a lover, too;
And such as might this nymph persuade,
To all that Love for Love should do.

This second work she well began,
With leisure, and by slow degrees,
But found it hard to make a man,
That could so choice a beauty please.

She wrought and wrought, and then gave o'er;
Then did another model try;
But, less contented than before,
She laid the work for ever by.

I asked the cause, and straight she said:
'Tis very possible I find
To match the body which I made,
But I can never fit her mind.

For that still various seems and strange,
And, since all lovers various be
And apt as mistresses to change,
I cannot make my work agree.

Now sexes meet not by design
When they the world's chief work advance;
But in the dark they sometimes join,
As wandering atoms meet by chance.

Goddess, I cried, pray pardon me!
You little know our lovers' hearts.
The Devil take 'em! they agree!
And, Nature failing, want no arts.

THE DYING LOVER

DEAR Love, let me this evening die!
Oh smile not to prevent it.
Dead with my rivals let me lie;
Or we shall both repent it.
Frown quickly then, and break my heart;
That so my way of dying
May, though my life was full of smart,
Be worth the world's envying.

Some, striving knowledge to refine,
Consume themselves with thinking;
And some, who friendship seal in wine,
Are kindly killed with drinking.
And some are wrackt on th' Indian coast,
Thither by gain invited;
Some are in smoke of battles lost,
Whom drums, not lutes, delighted.

Alas, how poorly these depart,
Their graves still unattended!
Who dies not of a broken heart,
Is not of death commended.
His memory is only sweet.
All praise and pity moving,
Who kindly at his mistress' feet
Does die with over-loving.

And now thou frown'st, and now I die;
My corpse by lovers followed,
Which straight shall by dead lovers lie;
That ground is only hallowed.
If priests are grieved I have a grave,
My death not well approving,
The poets my estate shall have
To teach them the art of loving.

And now let lovers ring their bells,
For me poor youth departed,
Who kindly in his love excels
By dying broken hearted.
My grave with flowers let virgins strow;
Which, if thy tears fall near them,
May so transcend in scent and show,
As thou wilt shortly wear them.

Such flowers how much will florists prize,
Which, on a lover growing,
Are watered by his mistress' eyes,
With pity ever flowing.

A grave so decked will, though thou art
Yet fearful to come nigh me,
Provoke thee straight to break thy heart,
And lie down boldly by me.

Then everywhere all bells shall ring,
All light to darkness turning,
Whilst every quire shall sadly sing
And Nature's self wear mourning.
Yet we hereafter may be found,
By destiny's right placing,
Making, like flowers, love underground,
Whose roots are still embracing.

SONG *from* THE LAW AGAINST LOVERS

WAKE all the dead! what ho! what ho!
How soundly they sleep whose pillows lie low!
They mind not poor lovers who walk above
On the decks of the world in storms of love.
No whisper now nor glance can pass
Through wickets or through panes of glass;
For our windows and doors are shut and barred.
Lie close in the church and in the churchyard.
In every grave make room, make room!
The world's at an end, and we come, we come.

The state is now Love's foe, Love's foe;
Has seized on his arms, his quiver and bow;
Has pinioned his wings and fettered his feet;
Because he made way for lovers to meet.
But, oh sad chance, his judge was old;
Hearts grow cruel when blood grows cold.
No man being young his process would draw.
O heavens, that love should be subject to law!
Lovers go woo the dead, the dead!
Lie two in a grave, and to bed, to bed!

MADRIGAL

LIKE the Idalian queen,
Her hair about her eyne,
With neck and breast's ripe apples to be seen,
At first glance of the morn,
In Cyprus' gardens gathering those fair flowers
Which of her blood were born,
I saw, but fainting saw, my paramours.
The Graces naked danced about the place,
The winds and trees amazed
With silence on her gazed;
The flowers did smile, like those upon her face,
And as their aspen stalks those fingers band,
That she might read my case,
A hyacinth I wished me in her hand.

SONG *from* THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA

BENEATH a myrtle shade,
Which Love for none but happy lovers made,
I slept; and straight my love before me brought
Phillis, the object of my waking thought:
Undressed she came my flames to meet,
While Love strowed flowers beneath her feet,
Flowers which, so pressed by her, became more sweet.

From the bright vision's head
A careless veil of lawn was loosely spread:
From her white temples fell her shaded hair,
Like cloudy sunshine, not too brown nor fair;
Her hands, her lips did love inspire,
Her every grace my heart did fire:
But most her eyes, which languished with desire.

Ah, charming fair, said I,
How long can you my bliss and yours deny?
By Nature and by Love this lonely shade
Was for revenge of suff'ring lovers made:
Silence and shades with love agree,
Both shelter you and favour me;
You cannot blush because I cannot see.

No, let me die, she said,
Rather than lose the spotless name of maid:
Faintly, methought, she spoke, for all the while
She bid me not believe her with a smile.
Then die, said I. She still denied,
And is it thus, thus, thus, she cried,
You use a harmless maid? and so she died.

I waked and straight I knew
I loved so well it made my dream prove true:
Fancy, the kinder mistress of the two,
Fancy had done what Phillis would not do.
Ah cruel nymph, cease your disdain,
While I can dream you scorn in vain:
Asleep or waking you must ease my pain.

SONG *from* MARRIAGE À LA MODE

WHILST Alexis lay prest
In her arms he loved best,
With his hand round her neck
And his head on her breast,
He found the fierce pleasure too hasty to stay,
And his soul in the tempest just flying away.

When Caelia saw this,
With a sigh and a kiss,
She cried "Oh my dear, I am robbed of my bliss;
'Tis unkind to your love and unfaithfully done,
To leave me behind you and die all alone".

The youth, tho' in haste,
And breathing his last,
In pity died slowly while she died more fast,
Till at length she cried "Now, my dear, now let us go!
Now die, my Alexis, and I will die too".

Thus entranced they did lie,
Till Alexis did try
To recover more breath that again he might die:
Then often they died; but the more they did so,
The nymph died more quick and the shepherd more slow.

SONG *from* THE SPANISH FRIAR

FAREWELL, ungrateful traitor,
Farewell, my perjured swain!
Let never injured creature
Believe a man again.
The pleasure of possessing,
Surpasses all expressing,
But 'tis too short a blessing,
And love too long a pain.

'Tis easy to deceive us
In pity of your pain;
But when we love you leave us
To rail at you in vain.
Before we have descried it
There is no bliss beside it;
But she that once has tried it
Will never love again.

The passion you pretended
Was only to obtain;
But when the charm is ended
The charmer you disdain.

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Till Alexis did try
To recover more breath that again he might die:
Then often they died; but the more they did so,
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The passion you pretended
Was only to obtain;
But when the charm is ended
The charmer you disdain.

Your love by ours we measure
Till we have lost our treasure;
But dying is a pleasure
When living is a pain.

SONG *from* ŒDIPUS

HEAR, ye sullen powers below;
Hear, ye taskers of the dead.
You that boiling cauldrons blow,
You that scum the molten lead.
You that pinch with red-hot tongs;
You that drive the trembling hosts
 Of poor, poor ghosts,
With your sharpened prongs;
You that thrust 'em off the brim;
You that plunge 'em when they swim;
 Till they drown;
 Till they go
 On a row,
 Down, down, down,
Ten thousand, thousand, thousand fathoms low.

Music for a while
Shall your cares beguile
Wondering how your pains were eased;
And disdaining to be pleased;
 Till Alecto free the dead
 From their eternal bands;
 Till the snakes drop from her head,
 And whip from out her hands. . . .

SONG *from* THE INDIAN EMPEROR

AH fading joy, how quickly art thou past!
Yet we thy ruin haste.
As if the cares of human life were few,
We seek out new,
And follow fate, which would too fast pursue.

See how on every bough the birds express
In their sweet notes their happiness.
They all enjoy, and nothing spare,
But on their mother nature lay their care:
Why then should man, the lord of all below,
Such troubles choose to know
As none of all his subjects undergo?

Hark, hark, the waters fall, fall, fall,
And with a murmuring sound
Dash, dash upon the ground,
To gentle slumbers call.

A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY, 1687

I

FROM harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began;
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high:

"Arise, ye more than dead".
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry
In order to their stations leap,
And music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

II

What passion cannot music raise and quell!
When Jubal struck the corded shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
And wondering on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound.
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell
That spoke so sweetly and so well.
What passion cannot music raise and quell!

III

The trumpet's loud clangor
Excites us to arms,
With shrill notes of anger,
And mortal alarms.
The double double double beat
Of the thundering drum
Cries: "Hark! the foes come;
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat".

IV

The soft complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whispered by the warbling lute.

V

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs, and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains, and height of passion,
For the fair, disdainful dame.

VI

But O! what art can teach,
What human voice can reach,
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To mend the quires above.

VII

Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees unrooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre;
But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher;
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appeared,
Mistaking earth for heaven.

Grand Chorus:

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the blest above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And music shall untune the sky.

From THE SECULAR MASQUE (1700)

Janus:

CHRONOS, Chronos, mend thy pace:
An hundred times the rolling sun
Around the radiant belt has run
In his revolving race.
Behold, behold, the goal in sight;
Spread thy fans and wing thy flight.

Chronos:

Weary, weary of my weight,
Let me, let me drop my freight,
And leave the world behind.
I could not bear,
Another year,
The load of humankind.

Momus (to Mars):

The sword within the scabbard keep,
And let mankind agree;
Better the world were fast asleep,
Than kept awake by thee.
The fools are only thinner,
With all their cost and care;
But neither side a winner,
For things are as they were.

Venus:

Calms appear when storms are past;
Love will have his hour at last:
Nature is my kindly care;
Mars destroys, and I repair;
Take me, take me, while you may,
Venus comes not every day.

Chorus:

All, all of a piece throughout:
Thy chase had a beast in view;
Thy wars brought nothing about;
Thy lovers were all untrue.
'Tis well an old age is out,
And time to begin a new.

SONG

CHLOE's a Nymph in flowery groves,
A Nereid in the streams,
Saint-like she in the temple moves,
A woman in my dreams.

Love steals artillery from her eyes,
The Graces point her charms,
Orpheus is rivalled in her voice,
And Venus in her arms.

Never so happily in one
Did heaven and earth combine;
And yet 'tis flesh and blood alone
That makes her so divine. . . .

OF BEAUTY

LET us use it while we may,
Snatch those joys that haste away!
Earth her winter coat may cast,
And renew her beauty past:
But, our winter come, in vain
We solicit Spring again;
And when our furrows snow shall cover,
Love may return but never lover.

A ROSE

BLOWN in the morning, thou shalt fade ere noon.
What boots a life which in such haste forsakes thee?
Thou'rt wondrous frolic, being to die so soon,
And passing proud a little colour makes thee.

If thee thy brittle beauty so deceives,
Know then the thing that swells thee is thy bane;
For the same beauty doth, in bloody leaves,
The sentence of thy early death contain.

Some clown's coarse lungs will poison thy sweet flower,
Or by the careless plough thou shalt be torn;
And many Herods lie in wait each hour
To murder thee as soon as thou art born—

Nay, force thy bud to blow—their tyrant breath
Anticipating life, to hasten death!

From AN ODE

*Upon Occasion of His Majesty's Proclamation in the
year 1630 commanding the Gentry to reside upon
their Estates in the Country*¹

ONLY the Island which we sow
(A world without the world) so far
From present wounds, it cannot show
An ancient scar.

White Peace (the beautiful'st of things)
Seems here her everlasting rest
To fix, and spreads her downy wings
Over the nest.

As when great Jove, usurping reign,
From the plagued world did her exile
And tied her with a golden chain
To one blest Isle:

Which in a sea of plenty swam,
And turtles sang on every bough,
A safe retreat to all that came,
As ours is now.

* * * * *

Believe me, Ladies, you will find
In that sweet life more solid joys,
More true contentment to the mind,
Than all town toys.

¹ Massingham in *Seventeenth Century Verse* has so rearranged the succession of its lines as to render this poem completely unintelligible.

Nor Cupid there less blood doth spill,
But heads his shafts with chaster love,
Not feathered with a sparrow's quill,
But of a dove.

There shall you hear the nightingale
(The harmless syren of the wood)
How prettily she tells a tale
Of rape and blood.

The lyric lark, with all beside
Of nature's feathered quire: and all
The Commonwealth of flowers in'ts pride
Behold you shall.

The lily queen, the royal rose,
The gilliflower, prince of the wood,
The courtier tulip (gay in clothes),
The regal bud.

The violet, purple senator,
How they do mock the pomp of state
And all that at the surly door
Of great ones wait.

Plant trees you may, and see them shoot
Up with your children, to be served
To your clean boards and fairest fruit
To be preserved:

And learn to use their several gums,
'Tis innocence in the sweet blood
Of cherries, apricocks and plums
To be imbued.

DEATH

Oh, the sad day!
When friends shall shake their heads and say
Of miserable me—
“Hark, how he groans, look how he pants for breath,
See how he struggles with the pangs of death!”
When they shall say of these poor eyes—
“How hollow and how dim they be!
Mark how his breast does swell and rise
Against his potent enemy!”
When some old friend shall step to my bedside,
Touch my chill face, and then shall gently slide,
And—when his next companions say
“How does he do? What hopes?”—shall turn away,
Answering only with a lift-up hand—
“Who can his fate withstand?”
Then shall a gasp or two do more
Than e’er my rhetoric could before:
Persuade the peevish world to trouble me no more!

THE ADVICE

Poor Celia once was very fair,
A quick bewitching eye she had,
Most neatly looked her braided hair,
Her dainty cheeks would make you mad,
Upon her lips did all the Graces play,
And on her breast ten thousand Cupids lay.

Then many a doting lover came
From seventeen till twenty-one,
Each told her of his mighty flame,
But she, forsooth, affected none.
One was not handsome, t'other was not fine,
This of tobacco smelt, and that of wine.

But t'other day it was my fate
To walk along that way alone,
I saw no coach before her gate,
But at the door I heard her moan:
She dropped a tear, and sighing, seemed to say,
Young ladies, marry, marry while you may!

INVOCATION OF SILENCE

STILLBORN Silence, thou that art
Floodgate of the deeper heart;
Offspring of a heavenly kind,
Frost o' the mouth and thaw o' the mind;
Secrecy's confident, and he
Who makes religion mystery;
Admiration's speaking'st tongue,—
Leave thy desert shades among
Reverend hermits' hallowed cells,
Where retired'st devotion dwells:
With thy enthusiasms come,
Seize our tongues, and strike us dumb.

MUSIC

OH, ecstasy divine! I cannot hold!
Farewell, dull earth! See where my ravished soul
Stands shivering on the edge of its slow clay!
With the next rising note 'twill fly away.
I faint, I faint. The powerful charm forbear!
Nay, but sing on: sure that will keep it here.
Whither fond soul, ah, whither wouldst thou fly?
To Heaven? Can there be sweeter harmony?
'Tis strange the charms of harmony which give
To all things life, should make me cease to live.
Yet is this death? If it be thus to die,
Death cannot be a curse; or if it be,
Ye angry Powers, may't ever light on me.

TO THE MOMENT LAST PAST

O WHITHER dost thou fly? Cannot my vow
Intreat thee tarry? Thou wert here but now,
And thou art gone? like ships which plough the sea,
And leave no print for man to track their way.
O unseen wealth! who thee did husband, can
Outvie the jewels of the ocean,
The mines of the earth! One sigh well spent in thee
Had been a purchase for eternity!
We will not loose thee then. Castara, where
Shall we find out his hidden sepulchre;
And we'll revive him. Not the cruel stealth
Of fate shall rob us, of so great a wealth;
Undone in thrift! while we besought his stay,
Ten of his fellow moments fled away.

THE CALL

ROMIRA, stay,
And run not thus like a young roe away;
 No enemy
Pursues thee, foolish girl, 'tis only I;
 I'll keep off harms,
If thou'll be pleased to garrison mine arms.
 What! dost thou fear
I'll turn a traitor? May these roses here
 To paleness shred,
And lilies stand disguised in new red,
 If that I lay
A snare, wherein thou wouldst not gladly stay.
 See, see, the sun
Does slowly to his azure lodging run;
 Come, sit but here,
And presently he'll quit our hemisphere:
 So still among
Lovers, time is too short or else too long.
 Here will we spin
Legends for them that have love-martyrs been:
 Here on this plain
We'll talk Narcissus to a flower again.
 Come here, and choose
On which of these proud plats thou would repose;
 Here may'st thou shame
The rusty violets, with the crimson flame
 Of either cheek,
And primroses white as thy fingers seek:
 Nay, thou may'st prove
That man's most noble passion is to love.

SONG

DISTIL not poison in mine ears,
Aërial Syrens! nor untie
These sable fetters: yonder spheres
Dance to a silent harmony.

Could I but follow where you lead,
Disrobed of earth and plumed by air,
Then I my tenuous self might spread,
As quick as fancy everywhere.

But I'll make sallies now and then:
Thus can my unconfined eye
Take journey and return again;
Yet on her crystal couch still lie.

THE DREAM

METHOUGHT I heard the charming Echo say
"Arise, my love, from hence, and come away;
Though the waves roll, the mighty tempest's done,
And all's concluding with the setting sun;
I'm come to lead thee to thy port again,
And place thee in the lost Jerusalem".
At this my feeble pulse with joy beat high
To see my ancient Paradise so nigh;
Then swift I hoised up sail and bore away,
As swift as eagles when they find a prey;
Here I presumed more solid joys to find,
But thoughts conveyed me back though 'gainst the wind.

VIRTUE

SWEET day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky:
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night;
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie;
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turns to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

LIFE

I MADE a posy, while the day ran by:
Here will I smell my remnant out, and tie
My life within this band.
But time did beckon to the flowers, and they
By noon most cunningly did steal away,
And withered in my hand.

My hand was next to them, and then my heart:
I took, without more thinking, in good part
 Time's gentle admonition:
Who did so sweetly death's sad taste convey,
Making my mind to smell my fatal day,
 Yet sugaring the suspicion.

Farewell, dear flowers, sweetly your time ye spent,
Fit, while ye lived, for smell or ornament,
 And after death for cures.
I follow straight without complaints or grief,
Since, if my scent be good, I care not if
 It be as short as yours.

DELIGHT IN DISORDER

A SWEET disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantoness:
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring lace, which here and there
Enthralls the crimson stomacher:
A cuff, neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly:
A winning wave (deserving note)
In the tempestuous petticoat:
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part.

UPON JULIA'S HAIR FILLED WITH DEW

Dew sate on Julia's hair,
And spangled too,
Like leaves that laden are
 With trembling dew:
Or glittered to my sight,
 As when the beams
Have their reflected light
 Danc't by the streams.

JULIA'S PETTICOAT

THY azure robe, I did behold,
As airy as the leaves of gold:
Which erring here, and wandering there,
Pleased with transgression everywhere:
Sometimes 'twould pant, and sigh, and heave,
As if to stir it scarce had leave:
But having got it, thereupon,
'Twould make a brave expansion.
And pounc't with stars, it showed to me
Like a celestial canopy.
Sometimes 'twould blaze, and then abate
Like to a flame grown moderate:
Sometimes away 'twould wildly fling;
Then to thy thighs so closely cling,
That some conceit did melt me down,
As lovers fall into a swoon:
And all confused, I there did lie
Drowned in delights, but could not die.
That leading cloud I followed still,
Hoping t'have seen of it my fill;
But ah! I could not: should it move
To Life Eternal, I could love.

UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES

WHENAS in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then (methinks), how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave vibration each way free;
O how that glittering taketh me!

THE APRON OF FLOWERS

To gather flowers Sappha went,
And homeward she did bring
Within her lawny continent,
The treasure of the Spring.

She smiling blushed, and blushing smiled,
And sweetly blushing thus,
She looked as she'd been got with child
By young Favonius.

Her apron gave (as she did pass)
An odour more divine,
More pleasing, too, than ever was
The lap of Proserpine.

THE VISION

SITTING alone (as one forsook)
Close by a silver-shedding brook,
With hands held up to Love, I wept,
And after sorrows spent, I slept:
Then in a vision I did see
A glorious form appear to me.

A virgin's face she had; her dress
Was like a sprightly Spartaness.
A silver bow with green silk strung,
Down from her comely shoulders hung:
And as she stood, the wanton air
Dangled the ringlets of her hair.
Her legs were such Diana shows,
When tucked up she a-hunting goes;
With buskins shortened to descry
The happy dawning of her thigh;
Which when I saw, I made access
To kiss that tempting nakedness:
But she forbad me with a wand
Of myrtle she had in her hand:
And chiding me, said, "Hence, remove,
Herrick, thou art too coarse to love".

THE VISION OF ELECTRA

I DREAMED we both were in a bed
Of roses, almost smotherèd:
The warmth and sweetness had me there
Made lovingly familiar;
But that I heard thy sweet breath say,
Faults done by night will blush by day:
I kissed thee (panting), and I call
Night to the record! that was all.
But ah! if empty dreams so please,
Love, give me more such nights as these.

THE FUNERAL RITES OF THE ROSE

THE Rose was sick, and smiling died;
And (being to be sanctified)
About the bed, there sighing stood
The sweet and flowery sisterhood.
Some hung the head, while some did bring
(To wash her) water from the spring.
Some laid her forth, while others wept,
But all a solemn fast there kept.
The holy sisters some among
The sacred dirge and trental sung.
But ah! what sweets smelt everywhere,
As Heaven had spent all perfumes there.
At last, when prayers for the dead,
And rites were all accomplished,
They, weeping, spread a lawny loom,
And closed her up, as in a tomb.

THE MAD MAID'S SONG

Good morrow to the day so fair;
Good morning, Sir, to you:
Good morrow to mine own torn hair
Bedabbled with the dew.

Good morning to this primrose too;
Good morrow to each maid,
That will with flowers the tomb bestrew,
Wherein my Love is laid.

Ah! woe is me, woe, woe is me,
Alack and welladay!
For pity, Sir, find out that bee
Which bore my Love away.

I'll seek him in your bonnet brave;
I'll seek him in your eyes;
Nay, now I think th'ave made his grave
I' th' bed of strawberries.

I'll seek him there; I know, ere this,
The cold, cold Earth doth shake him;
But I will go, or send a kiss
By you, Sir, to awake him.

Pray hurt him not; though he be dead,
He knows well who do love him,
And who with green turfs rear his head,
And who do rudely move him.

He's soft and tender (Pray take heed)
With bands of cowslips bind him;
And bring him home; but 'tis decreed,
That I shall never find him.

HIS GRANGE, OR PRIVATE WEALTH

THOUGH clock,
To tell how night draws hence, I've none,
A cock
I have to sing how day draws on.

I have
A maid, my Prew, by good luck sent,
To save
That little Fates me gave or lent.
A hen
I keep, which, creaking day by day,
Tells when
She goes her long white egg to lay.
A goose
I have, which, with a jealous ear,
Lets loose
Her tongue to tell what danger's near.
A lamb
I keep, tame, with my morsels fed,
Whose dam
An orphan left him, lately dead.
A cat
I keep, that plays about my house,
Grown fat
With eating many a miching mouse.
To these
A Tracy¹ do I keep, whereby
I please
The more my rural privacy.
Which are
But toys, to give my heart some ease:
Where care
None is, slight things do lightly please.

¹ His spaniel. He omits to mention his pig.

THE AMBER BEAD

I SAW a fly within a bead
Of amber cleanly buried:
The urn was little, but the room
More rich than Cleopatra's tomb.

ON HIMSELF

I FEAR no earthly powers;
But care for crowns of flowers:
And love to have my beard
With wine and oil besmeared.
This day I'll drown all sorrow;
Who knows to live to-morrow?

TO ELECTRA

MORE white than whitest lilies far,
Or snow, or whitest swans you are:
More white than are the whitest creams,
Or moonlight tinselling the streams:
More white than pearls, or Juno's thigh;
Or Pelops' arm of ivory.
True, I confess, such whites as these
May me delight, not fully please:
Till, like Ixion's cloud you be
White, warm and soft to lie with me.

UPON JULIA'S VOICE

So smooth, so sweet, so silvery is thy voice,
As, could they hear, the Damned would make no noise;
And listen to thee (walking in thy chamber)
Melting melodious words to lutes of amber.

TO MEADOWS

YE have been fresh and green,
Ye have been filled with flowers:
And ye the walks have been
Where maids have spent their hours.

You have beheld how they
With wicker arks did come
To kiss, and bear away
The richer cowslips home.

Y'ave heard them sweetly sing,
And seen them in a round:
Each virgin like a Spring,
With honeysuckles crowned.

But now we see none here,
Whose silvery feet did tread,
And with dishevelled hair
Adorned this smoother mead.

Like unthriffs, having spent
Your stock, and needy grown,
Y'are left here to lament
Your poor estates alone.

TO HIS MAID PREW

THESE summer-birds did with thy master stay
The times of warmth; but then they flew away;
Leaving their poet (being now grown old)
Exposed to all the coming winter's cold.
But thou kind Prew did'st with my fates abide,
As well the winter's as the summer's tide:
For which thy love, live with thy master here,
Not one, but all the seasons of the year.

TWO EPITAPHS

Upon a Virgin

HERE a solemn fast we keep,
While all beauty lies asleep.
Hushed be all things: (no noise here)
But the toning of a tear:
Or a sigh of such as bring
Cowslips for her covering.

Upon Prew his Maid

IN this little urn is laid
Prewdence Baldwin (once my maid)
From whose happy spark here let
Spring the purple violet.

TO ANTHEA

Now is the time when all the lights wax dim;
And thou (Anthea) must withdraw from him
Who was thy servant. Dearest, bury me
Under that holy-oak, or gospel tree:
Where (though thou see'st not) thou may think upon
Me, when thou yearly go'st procession:
Or for mine honour, lay me in that tomb,
In which thy sacred relics shall have room.
For my embalming (Sweetest) there will be
No spices wanting, when I'm laid by thee.

TO HIS LOVELY MISTRESSES

ONE night i' th' year, my dearest Beauties, come
And bring these dew-drink-offerings to my tomb.
When thence ye see my reverend ghost to rise,
And there to lick th' effusèd sacrifice:
Though paleness be the livery I wear,
Look ye not wan, or colourless for fear.
Trust me, I will not hurt ye; or once show
The least grim look, or cast a frown on you:
Nor shall the tapers when I'm there, burn blue.
This I may do (perhaps) as I glide by,
Cast on my girls a glance, and loving eye:
Or fold mine arms and sigh, because I've lost
The world so soon, and in it, you the most.
Than these, no fears more on your fancies fall,
Though then I smile and speak no words at all.

ON AN INDIAN TOMINEIOS
THE LEAST OF BIRDS

I'm made in sport by Nature, when
She's tired with the stupendous weight
Of forming elephants and beasts of state;
Rhinocerots, that love the fen;
The elks that scale the hills of snow,
And lions couching in their awful den;
These do work Nature hard, and then
Her wearied hand in me doth show
What she can for her own diversion do.

Man is a little world ('tis said)
And I in miniature am drawn,
A perfect creature, but in short-hand shown.
The ruck in Madagascar bred,
(If new discoveries truth do speak)
Whom greatest beasts and armèd horsemen dread,
Both him and me one artist made:
Nature in this delight doth take,
That can so great and little monsters make.

The Indians me a sunbeam name,
And I can be the child of one:
So small I am, my kind is hardly known.
To some a sportive bird I seem,
And some believe me but a fly;
Though me a feathered fowl the best esteem:
Whate'er I am, I'm Nature's gem,
And like a sunbeam from the sky,
I can't be followed by the quickest eye.

I'm the true bird of Paradise,
And heavenly dew's my only meat:
My mouth so small, 'twill nothing else admit.
No scales know how my weight to poise,
So light, I seem condensèd air;
And did at th' end of the Creation rise,
When Nature wanted more supplies,
When she could little matter spare,
But in return did make the work more rare.

TO AMANDA WALKING IN THE GARDEN

AND now what monarch would not gardener be,
My fair Amanda's stately gait to see?
How her feet tempt! how soft and light she treads,
Fearing to wake the flowers from their beds!
Yet from their sweet green pillows everywhere,
They start and gaze about to see my Fair.
Look at yon flower yonder, how it grows
Sensibly! how it opes its leaves and blows,
Puts its best Easter clothes on, neat and gay:
Amanda's presence makes it holiday!
Look how on tiptoe that fair lily stands
To look on thee, and court thy whiter hands
To gather it! I saw in yonder crowd—
That tulip bed of which Dame Flora's proud—
A short dwarf flower did enlarge its stalk,
And shoot an inch to see Amanda walk.
Nay, look, my Fairest! look how fast they grow
Into a scaffold-method spring! as though,
Riding to Parliament, were to be seen
In pomp and state some royal amorous Queen.
The gravelled walks, though even as a die,
Lest some loose pebble should offensive lie,
Quilt themselves o'er with downy moss for thee;
The walls are hanged with blossomed tapestry
To hide their nakedness when looked upon;
The maiden fig tree puts Eve's apron on;
The broad-leaved sycamore, and every tree,
Shakes like the trembling asp, and bends to thee,
And each leaf proudly strives, with fresher air
To fan the curlèd tresses of thy hair. . . .

Look how that pretty modest columbine
Hangs down its head, to view those feet of thine!
See the fond motion of the strawberry
Creeping on th' earth, to go along with thee!
The lovely violet makes after too,
Unwilling yet, my dear, to part with you;
The knot-grass and the daisies catch thy toes,
To kiss my fair one's feet before she goes;
All court and wish me lay Amanda down,
And give my dear a new green-flowered gown.
Come, let me kiss thee falling, kiss at rise,
Thou in the garden, I in Paradise.

SONG *from* THE ENGLISH MONSIEUR

LADIES, farewell! I must retire,
Though I your faces all admire,
And think you heavens in your kinds,
Some for beauties, some for minds:
If I stay and fall in love,
One of these heavens, hell would prove.

Could I know one, and she not know it,
Perhaps I then might undergo it;
But if the least she guess my mind,
Straight in a circle I'm confined;
By this I see, who once doth dote,
Must wear a woman's livery coat.

Therefore, this danger to prevent,
And still to keep my heart's content,
Into the country I'll with speed,
With hounds and hawks my fancy feed:
Both safer pleasures to pursue,
Than staying to converse with you.

YOU SAY YOU LOVE . . .

You say you love! Repeat again,
Repeat the amazing sound;
Repeat the cause of all my pain,
The cure of every wound.

What you to thousands have denied,
To me you freely give;
Whilst I in humble silence died,
Your mercy bids me live.

So upon Latmos' top each night
Endymion sighing lay,
Gazed on the moon's transcendent light,
Despaired and durst not pray.

But divine Cynthia saw his grief,
The effect of conquering charms;
Unasked, the goddess brings relief,
And falls into his arms.

CLOE

IMPATIENT with desire at last
I ventured to lay forms aside;
'Twas I was modest, not she chaste;
Cloe, so gently pressed, complied.

With idle awe, an amorous fool,
I gazed upon her eyes with fear;
Say, Love, how came your slave so dull,
To read no better there?

Thus to ourselves the greatest foes,
Although the nymph be well inclined;
For want of courage of propose,
By our own folly she's unkind.

From BEAUTY OF CHANGE

. . . ROSES in their first crimson dress appear,
Lilies their ancient beauties display,
And violets the same blue mantles wear
They wore on their creation's great show-day.

But tulips each new year their robes have new,
Fertile in colours with the fertile spring;
All shades pursuing still, save only blue,
The season's changes, marked in theirs, they bring.

These that like freckled beauties now appear,
Their freckles gone, boast clearer white and red:
Their colours changing with the changing year,
They with new smiles and blushes dye their bed.

Those which sprung from their mother's painted womb
In naked yellow, show a tawny skin;
In new successions fairer yet will come,
And white, as in their naked smocks, be seen.

The widow, in her royal purple veiled,
That hangs her head till her short mourning's done,
When she her time of widowhood has wailed,
Light colours and striped Indian silks puts on . . .

Could living fair ones, living tulips, so
As they resemblances in beauty hold,
Like resemblances in their changes show,
Changing more lovely still as they grow old,

Could lovers' beauties, like the florist's, bloom,
And ever blow afresh, they would not grieve
That those impairing years which are to come,
Take from their loves what they to flowers give.

SLEEPING ON HER COUCH

Thus lovely Sleep did first appear,
Ere yet it was with Death allied,
When the first fair one, like her here,
Lay down and for a little died.

Ere happy souls knew how to die
And trod the rougher paths to bliss,
Transported in an ecstasy
They breathed out such smooth ways as this.

Her hand bears gently up her head,
And, like a pillow, raised does keep;
But softer than her couch is spread,
Though that be softer than her sleep.

Alas, that death-like Sleep or Night
Should power have to close those eyes,
Which once vied with the fairest light
Or what gay colours thence did rise.

Ah! that lost beams thus long have shined
To them with darkness overspread,
Unseen as day breaks to the blind
Or the sun rises to the dead.

That sun in all his eastern pride
Did never see a shape so rare,
Nor Night within its black arms hide
A silent beauty half so fair.

THE THOUGHT

To a Lady, Enquiring After Him in His Travels

SINCE in the travels of your thought,
One, chancing from the rest to stray,
Your commendations to me brought,
And th' errand done, would needs away;

Though I could longer entertain
The little traveller with me,
And wished for all its fellow train
And all its pretty company;

Yet since from me it needs would part,
I wished it back again with you;
But then I wished too, that my heart
Might as its page, or lackey go.

I wished for flying coach as brave,
As artificial and as fair,
As any thoughts of fashion have,
When they ride out to take the air;

Postilion too, and all things gay,
As any of the noble rest,
The thoughts of quality, that stray
From out the lodgings of your breast. . . .

THE ECHO

WHERE do these voices stray
Which lose in woods their way?
Erring each step anew,
While they false paths pursue.
Through many windings led,
Some crookedly proceed:
Some to the ear turn back
Asking which way to take,
Wandering without a guide
They holloa from each side,
And call and answer all
To one another's call.
Whence may these sounds proceed,
From woods, or from the dead?
Sure, souls here once forlorn,
The living make their scorn.
And shepherds that lived here,
Now ceasing to appear,
Mock thus in scorn the fair
That would not grant their prayer;
While nymphs their voices learn
And mock them in return:
Or if at least the sound
Does from the woods rebound,
The woods of them complain
Who shepherds' vows disdain.
Woods and rocks answer all
To the wronged lover's call,

How deaf soe'er and hard,
They their complaints regard;
Which nymphs with scorn repay,
More deaf, more hard, than they.

From THE GRASSHOPPER

O THOU that swing'st upon the waving hair
Of some well-filled oaten beard,
Drunk every night with a delicious tear
Dropped thee from heaven where thou'rt reared!

The joys of earth and air are thine entire,
That with thy feet and wings dost hop and fly;
And when thy poppy works, thou dost retire
To thy carved acorn-bed to lie.

Up with the day, the sun thou welcom'st then,
Sport'st in the gilt plaits of his beams;
And all these merry days mak'st merry men,
Thyself, and melancholy streams.

But ah, the sickle! golden ears are cropped,
Ceres and Bacchus bid good-night;
Sharp frosty fingers all your flowers have topped,
And what scythes spared, winds shave off quite.

Poor verdant fool! and now green ice! thy joys
Large and as lasting as thy perch of grass,
Bid us lay in 'gainst winter, rain, and poise
Their floods with an o'er-flowing glass. . . .

BERMUDAS

WHERE the remote Bermudas ride,
In ocean's bosom unespied,
From a small boat, that rowed along,
The listening winds received this song:

“What should we do but sing His praise,
That led us through the watery maze,
Unto an isle so long unknown,
And yet far kinder than our own?
Where He the huge sea-monsters wracks,
That lift the deep upon their backs;
He lands us on a grassy stage,
Safe from the storms, and prelate's rage.
He gave us this eternal spring,
Which here enamels every thing,
And sends the fowls to us in care,
On daily visits through the air;
He hangs in shades the orange bright,
Like golden lamps in a green night,
And does in the pomegranates close
Jewels more rich than Ormus shows;
He makes the figs our mouths to meet,
And throws the melons at our feet;
But apples plants of such a price,
No tree could ever bear them twice;
With cedars chosen by His hand,
From Lebanon he stores the land,
And makes the hollow seas, that roar,
Proclaim the ambergris on shore;
He cast (of which we rather boast)

The Gospel's pearl upon our coast,
And in these rocks for us did frame,
A temple where to sound His name.
Oh! let our voice his praise exalt,
Till it arrive at Heaven's vault,
Which, thence (perhaps) rebounding, may
Echo beyond the Mexique Bay."

Thus sung they, in the English boat,
An holy and a cheerful note;
And all the way, to guide their chime,
With falling oars they kept the time.

THE GARDEN

(Translated)

How vainly men themselves amaze,
To win the palm, the oak, or bays;
And their incessant labours see
Crowned from some single harb, or tree,
Whose short and narrow-vergèd shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all the flowers and trees do close,
To weave the garlands of repose!

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence, thy sister dear?
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men.
Your sacred plants, if here below,

Only among the plants will grow;
Society is all but rude
To this delicious solitude.

No white nor red was ever seen
So amorous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress' name:
Little, alas! they know or heed,
How far these beauties her's exceed!
Fair trees! wheres'er your bark I wound,
No name shall but your own be found.

When we have run our passion's heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
Still in a tree did end their race;
Apollo hunted Daphne so,
Only that she might laurel grow;
And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
Not as a nymph, but for a reed.

What wondrous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine, and curious peach,
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Insnares with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;

The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide:
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and combs its silver wings,
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walked without a mate.
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one,
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skilful gardener drew
Of flowers, and herbs, this dial new;
Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run,
And, as it works, the industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we!
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers?

CLORINDA AND DAMON

CLORINDA. Damon, come drive thy flocks this way.

DAMON. No: 'tis too late they went astray.

CLORINDA. I have a grassy scutcheon spied,

Where Flora blazons all her pride;

The grass I aim to feast thy sheep,

The flowers I for thy temples keep.

DAMON. Grass withers, and the flowers too fade.

CLORINDA. Seize the short joys then, ere they vade.

Seest thou that unfrequented cave?

DAMON. That den?

CLORINDA. Love's shrine.

DAMON.

But virtue's grave.

CLORINDA. In whose cool bosom we may lie,

Safe from the sun.

DAMON.

Not Heaven's eye.

CLORINDA. Near this, a fountain's liquid bell

Tinkles within the concave shell.

DAMON. Might a soul bathe there and be clean,

Or slake its drought?

CLORINDA.

What is't you mean?

DAMON. These once have been enticing things,

Clorinda, pastures, caves and springs.

CLORINDA. And what late change?

DAMON.

The other day

Pan met me.

CLORINDA. What did great Pan say?

DAMON. Words that transcend poor shepherd's skill;

But he e'er since my songs does fill,

And his name swells my slender oat.

CLORINDA. Sweet must Pan sound in Damon's note.

DAMON. Clorinda's voice might make it sweet.

CLORINDA. Who would not in Pan's praises meet?

CHORUS

Of Pan the flowery pastures sing,
Caves echo, and the fountains ring.
Sing then while he doth us inspire;
For all the world is our Pan's quire.

TIME

TIME is a feathered thing
And, whilst I praise
The sparklings of thy looks and call them rays,
Takes wing,
Leaving behind him as he flies
An unperceivèd dimness in thine eyes.
His minutes whilst they're told
Do make us old;
And every sand of his fleet glass,
Increasing age as it doth pass,
Insensibly sows wrinkles there
Where flowers and roses do appear.
Whilst we do speak, our fire
Doth into ice expire;
Flames turn to frost,
And ere we can
Know how our crow turns swan,
Or how a silver snow
Springs there where jet did grow,
Our fading spring is in dull winter lost.

Since, then, the night hath hurled
Darkness, love's shade,
Over its enemy the day, and made
The world
Just such a blind and shapeless thing
As 'twas before light did from darkness spring,
Let us employ its treasure
And make shade pleasure;
Let's number out the hours by blisses,

And count the minutes by our kisses;
Let the heavens new motions feel
And by our embraces wheel.
And, whilst we try the way
By which love doth convey
Soul into soul,
And mingling so
Makes them such raptures know
As makes them entranced lie
In mutual ecstasy,
Let the harmonious spheres in music roll.

SONG *from* THE CONVENT OF PLEASURE

My cabinets are oyster-shells,
In which I keep my orient pearls;
To open them I use the tide,
As keys to locks, which opens wide
The oyster-shells; then out I take
Those orient pearls and crowns do make;
And modest coral I do wear,
Which blushes when it touches air.
On silver waves I sit and sing,
And then the fish lie listening:
Then sitting on a rocky stone
I comb my hair with fishes' bone;
The whilst Apollo with his beams
Doth dry my hair from watery streams.
His light doth glaze the water's face,
Make the large sea my looking-glass:
So when I swim on waters high,
I see myself as I glide by:
But when the sun begins to burn,
I back into my waters turn,
And dive unto the bottom low:
Then on my head the waters flow
In curlèd waves and circles round,
And thus with waters am I crowned.

¹ Described by Pepys as "a mad, conceited ridiculous woman". It is amusing to notice how the imagery of the dressing-table pervades this poem; even a sea-goddess, the Duchess remembers, needs to dry her hair after washing it.

CANTICLE¹

'Twas my Beloved spake,
I know his charming voice, I heard him say,
Rise up my Love, my fairest one awake,
Awake and come away.

The winter all is past
And stormy winds that with such rudeness blew;
The heavens are no longer overcast,
But try to look like you.

The flowers their sweets display,
The birds in short preludiums tune their throat,
The turtle in low murmurs does essay
Her melancholy note.

The fruitful vineyards make
An odorous smell, the fig looks fresh and gay,
Arise my Love, my fairest one awake,
Awake and come away.

¹ The Song of Solomon, with its mixture of erotic and religious imagery, had a great fascination for seventeenth-century poets. See a poem by Quarles, under "Devotional Verse".

From A POEM TO THE MEMORY OF MY
DEAR FRIEND MR. CHARLES MORWENT

THY soul within such silent pomp did keep,
As if humanity were lulled asleep;
So gentle was thy pilgrimage beneath,
Time's unheard feet scarce make less noise,
Or the soft journey which a planet goes:
Life seemed all calm as its last breath.
A still tranquillity so hushed thy breast,
As if some halcyon were its guest,
And there had built her nest;
It hardly now enjoys a greater rest. . . .

THE POET'S COMPLAINT

To a high hill where never yet stood tree,
Where only heath, coarse fern and furzes grow,
 Where (nipped by piercing air)
The flocks in tattered fleeces hardly graze,
 Led by uncouth thoughts and care,
Which did too much his pensive mind amaze,
A wandering bard, whose Muse was crazy grown,
Cloyed by the nauseous follies of the buzzing town,
Came, looked about him, sighed, and laid him down;
'Twas far from any path, but where the Earth
Was bare, and naked all as at her birth,
When by the Word it first was made,
 Ere God had said,
Let grass, and herds, and every green thing grow,
With fruitful trees after their kind, and it was so.
The whistling winds blew fiercely round his head,
 Cold was his lodging, hard his bed;
Aloft his eyes on the wide heavens he cast,
Where we are told peace only's found at last:
 And as he did its hopeless distance see,
Sighed deep, and cried, "How far is peace from me!" . . .

TO MY EXCELLENT LUCASIA,
ON OUR FRIENDSHIP

I DID not live until this time
Crowned my felicity,
When I could say without a crime,
I am not thine, but thee.

This carcass breathed, and walked, and slept,
So that the world believed
There was a soul the motions kept;
But they were all deceived.

For as a watch by art is wound
To motion, such was mine:
But never had Orinda found
A soul till she found thine;

Which now inspires, cures, and supplies,
And guides my darkened breast:
For thou art all that I can prize,
My joy, my life, my rest.

No bridegroom's nor crown-conqueror's mirth
To mine compared can be:
They have but pieces of the earth,
I've all the world in thee.

Then let our flames still light and shine,
And no false fear control,
As innocent as our design,
Immortal as our soul.

CHANGE

TIME voids the table, dinner's done;
And now our day's declining sun
Hath hurried his diurnal load
To the borders of the western road;
Fierce Phlegon, with his fellow steeds,
Now puffs and pants, and blows and bleeds,
And froths and fumes, remembering still
Their lashes up the Olympick hill,
Which having conquered, now disdain
The whip, and champ the frothy vein,
And with a full career they bend
Their paces to their journey's end:
Our blazing taper now hath lost
Her better half, nature hath crossed
Her forenoon book, and cleared that score,
But scarce gives trust for so much more:
And now the generous sap forsakes
Her fire grown twig: a breath even shakes
The down ripe fruit; fruit soon divorced
From her dear branch, untouched, unforced.
Now sanguine Venus doth begin
To draw her wanton colours in,
And flees neglected in disgrace,
Whilst Mars supplies her luke-warm place:
Blood turned to choler: what this age
Loses in strength it finds in rage:
That rich enamel, which of old
Damasked the downy cheek, and told
A harmless guilt, unasked, is now
Worn off from the audacious brow:

Luxurious dalliance, midnight revels,
Loose riot, and those venial evils
Which inconsiderate youth of late
Could plead, now want an advocate:
And what appeared in former times
Whispering as faults, now roar as crimes;
And now all ye whose lips were wont
To drench their coral in the font
Of forked Parnassus; you that be
The sons of Phoebus, and can flee
On wings of fancy to display
The flag of high invention, stay,
Repose your quills, your veins grow sour,
Tempt not your salt beyond her power:
If your palled fancies but decline,
Censure will strike at every line,
And wound your names, the popular ear
Weighs what you are, not what you were.
Thus, hackney like, we tire our age,
Spur-galled with change from stage to stage.

AN ODE TO MASTER ANTHONY STAFFORD

To hasten him into the Country

COME, spur away!
I have no patience for a longer stay;
But must go down,
And leave the chargeable noise of this great town.
I will the country see;
Where old simplicity,
Though hid in grey,
Doth look more gay
Than foppery in plush and scarlet clad.
Farewell, you city-wits that are
Almost at civil war!
'Tis time that I grow wise, when all the world grows mad.

More of my days
I will not spend to gain an idiot's praise;
Or to make sport
For some slight Puisne of the Inns of Court.
Then, worthy Stafford, say,
How shall we spend the day?
With what delights
Shorten the nights?
When from this tumult we are got secure,
Where mirth with all her freedom goes,
Yet shall no finger lose;
Where every word is thought, and every thought is pure.

There from the tree
We'll cherries pluck; and pick the strawberry;
And every day
Go see the wholesome country girls make hay,
Whose brown hath lovelier grace
Than any painted face
That I do know
Hyde Park can show.
Where I had rather gain a kiss, than meet
(Though some of them in greater state
Might court my love with plate)
The beauties of the Cheap, and wives of Lombard Street.

But think upon
Some other pleasures; these to me are none.
Why do I prate
Of women, that are things against my fate?
I never mean to wed
That torture to my bed:
My Muse is she
My Love shall be.
Let clowns get wealth, and heirs; when I am gone,
And the great bugbear, grisly Death,
Shall take this idle breath,
If I a poem leave, that poem is my son.

Of this, no more!
We'll rather taste the bright Pomona's store.
No fruit shall 'scape
Our palates, from the damson to the grape.
Then, full, we'll seek a shade,
And hear what music's made:

How Philomel
Her tale doth tell;
And how the other birds do fill the quire;
The thrush and blackbird lend their throats,
Warbling melodious notes.
We will all sports enjoy; which others but desire:

Ours is the sky,
Where, at what fowl we please, our hawk shall fly;
Nor will we spare
To hunt the crafty fox, or timorous hare;
But let our hounds run loose
In any ground they'll choose;
The buck shall fall,
The stag, and all.
Our pleasures must from their own warrants be,
For, to my Muse, if not to me,
I'm sure all game is free;
Heaven, earth, are all but parts of her great royalty

And when we mean
To taste of Bacchus' blessings now and then,
And drink by stealth
A cup or two to noble Barkley's health:
I'll take my pipe and try
The Phrygian melody,
Which he that hears,
Lets through his ears
A madness to distemper all the brain.
Then I another pipe will take
And Doric music make,
To civilize with graver notes our wits again.

UPON HIS LEAVING HIS MISTRESS

'Tis not that I am weary grown
Of being yours, and yours alone:
But with what face can I incline
To damn you to be only mine?
You, whom some kinder power did fashion,
By merit, and by inclination,
The joy at least of a whole nation.

Let meaner spirits of your sex,
With humble aims their thoughts perplex,
And boast, if by their arts they can
Contrive to make *one* happy man;
While, moved by an impartial sense,
Favours, like Nature, you dispense,
With universal influence.

See the kind seed-receiving Earth
To every grain affords a birth:
On her no showers unwelcome fall,
Her willing womb retains 'em all.
And shall my Caelia be confined?
No, live up to thy mighty mind;
And be the mistress of mankind.

LOVE AND LIFE

ALL my past life is mine no more,
The flying hours are gone:
Like transitory dreams giv'n o'er,
Whose images are kept in store,
By memory alone.

The time that is to come is not;
How can it then be mine?
The present moment's all my lot;
And that, as fast as it is got,
 Phillis, is only thine.

Then talk not of inconstancy,
False hearts, and broken vows;
If I, by miracle, can be
This live-long minute true to thee,
 'Tis all that Heaven allows.

A SONG

My dear mistress has a heart
Soft as those kind looks she gave me;
When with Love's resistless art,
And her eyes, she did enslave me.
But her constancy's so weak,
She's so wild and apt to wander,
That my jealous heart would break,
Should we live one day asunder.

Melting joys about her move,
Killing pleasures, wounding blisses;
She can dress her eyes in love,
And her lips can arm with kisses.
Angels listen when she speaks,
She's my delight, all mankind's wonder:
But my jealous heart would break,
Should we live one day asunder.

A SONG

ABSENT from thee I languish still;
Then ask me not, When I return?
The straying fool 'twill plainly kill,
To wish all day, all night to mourn.

Dear, from thine arms then let me fly,
That my fantastick mind may prove
The torments it deserves to try,
That tears my fixt heart from my Love.

When wearied with a world of woe,
To thy safe bosom I retire,
Where Love and Peace and Truth does flow,
May I contented there expire.

Lest once more wandering from that Heaven,
I fall on some base heart unblest,
Faithless to thee, false, unforgiven,
And lost my everlasting rest.

SONG *from* THE THRACIAN WONDER

ART thou gone in haste?
I'll not forsake thee;
Runnest thou ne'er so fast,
I'll overtake thee:
O'er the dales, o'er the downs,
Through the green meadows,
From the fields, through the towns,
To the dim shadows.

All along the plain
To the low fountains,
Up and down again,
From the high mountains
Echo shall then again
Tell her I follow,
And the woods to the floods
Carry my holla!
Holla!
La! la! lo! lo! lu!

LOVE STILL HAS SOMETHING OF THE SEA

Love still has something of the sea
From whence his mother rose;
No time his slaves from doubt can free,
Nor give their thoughts repose:

They are becalmed in clearest days,
And in rough weather tossed;
They wither under cold delays,
Or are in tempests lost.

One while they seem to touch the port,
Then straight into the main
Some angry wind in cruel sport
The vessel drives again.

At first disdain and pride they fear,
Which if they chance to 'scape,
Rivals and falsehood soon appear
In a more dreadful shape.

By such degrees to joy they come,
And are so long withstood,
So slowly they receive the sum,
It hardly does them good.

'Tis cruel to prolong a pain;
And to defer a joy,
Believe me, gentle Celemene,
Offends the wingèd boy.

An hundred thousand oaths your fears
Perhaps would not remove;
And if I gazed a thousand years
I could no deeper love.

THE BROKEN FAITH

LATELY, by clear Thames, his side,
Fair Lycòris I espied,
With the pen of her white hand
These words printing on the sand:
None Lycòris doth approve
But Mirtillo for her love.

Ah! false Nymph! those words were fit
In sand only to be writ:
For the quickly rising streams
Of oblivion and the Thames
In a little moment's stay
From the shore washed clean away
What thy hand had there impressed,
And Mirtillo from thy breast.

WEEPING AND KISSING

A KISS I begged; but, smiling, she
Denied it me:
When straight, her cheeks with tears o'erflown,
(Now kinder grown)
What smiling she'd not let me have,
She weeping gave.
Then you whom scornful beauties awe,
Hope yet relief;
For Love (who tears from smiles) can draw
Pleasure from grief.

SONG

PURSUING beauty, men descry
The distant shore and long to prove
(Still richer in variety)
The treasures of the land of love.

We women, like weak Indians, stand
Inviting from our golden coast
The wandering rovers to our land:
But she who trades with 'em is lost.

With humble vows they first begin,
Stealing unseen into the heart;
But, by possession settled in,
They quickly act another part.

For beads and baubles we resign
In ignorance our shining store;
Discover nature's richest mine,
And yet the tyrants will have more.

Be wise, be wise, and do not try
How he can court, or you be won:
For love is but discovery,
When that is made, the pleasure's done.

SONG

THOUGH you make no return to my passion,
Still, still I presume to adore;
'Tis in love but an odd reputation,
When faintly repulsed, to give o'er.
When you talk of your duty
I gaze on your beauty,
Nor mind the dull maxim at all:
Let it reign in Cheapside
With a citizen's bride,
It will ne'er be received at Whitehall.

What apocryphal tales are you told
By one who would make you believe
That, because of "to have and to hold",
You still must be pinned to his sleeve!
'Twere apparent high treason
'Gainst love and good reason,
Should one such a treasure engross:
He who knows not the joys
That attend such a choice,
Should resign to another who does.

THE EXEQUIES

DRAW near,
You lovers that complain
Of fortune or disdain,
And to my ashes lend a tear:
Melt the hard marble with your groans,
And soften the relentless stones,
Whose cold embraces the sad subject hide
Of all love's cruelties, and beauty's pride.

No verse,
No epicedium bring,
Nor peaceful requiem sing,
To charm the terrors of my hearse;
No profane numbers must flow near
The sacred silence that dwells here.
Vast griefs are dumb; softly, oh! softly mourn,
Lest you disturb the peace attends my urn

Yet strew
Upon my dismal grave
Such offerings as you have
Forsaken cypress and sad yew;
For kinder flowers can take no birth
Or growth from such unhappy earth.
Weep only o'er my dust, and say, "Here lies
To love and fate an equal sacrifice".

EXPECTATION

CHIDE, chide no more away
The fleeting daughters of the day,
Nor with impatient thoughts outrun
 The lazy sun,
Or think the hours do move too slow;
 Delay is kind,
And we too soon shall find
That which we seek, yet fear to know.

The mystic dark decrees
Unfold not of the Destinies,
Nor boldly seek to antedate
 The laws of Fate ;
Thy anxious search awhile forbear,
 Suppress thy haste,
And know that time at last
Will crown thy hope, or fix thy fear.

UPON THE VIRTUOUS BROWN

(I Know Who) At the Popinjay

LILIES and roses, let who will go suit ye;
I'm for the lovely brown, the lasting beauty.
Her cheeks are roses need no thorny fence,
And there's no lily like her innocence.
Their blossoms are but slaves to every blast,
But she's the same, when Spring and Autumn's past.
Her May's eternal: she, when envious Time
Shall be no more, is then but in her prime.
She shall bid all these fading forms adieu,
And Heaven and Earth shall for her sake be new.

From a Poem TO MY PALE PIPPIN*Pallor in ore sedet*

HER piteous looks may haply move
Compassion in me, never love.
Shall I bow down, or kneel to that
Which seems to me inanimate? . . .
Do ye not see how meagre death
Seems through her organs to steal breath?
As Succubus had from the dust
Reared her to gratify his lust. . . .
No, I'll to tavern, where being come,
The first attendant shows a room.
The next presents a glancing lass
Like Venus in a Venice glass.

With that I knock and as some sprite
I conjure up pure red and white.
My circle's a round table, and
In midst thereof does Hymen stand,
With a light taper, when I call
To celebrate my nuptial.
Here do I a French madam place,
And there a sweet-lipped Spanish lass.
Here all in white a lady dances,
And there in red another glances,
And lest mine eyes want fresh delight,
Here sits Claretta, red and white.
Nor do I compliment, I trow,
But tell 'em plain, 'tis so and so.
They struggle not, nor are they coy,
But I may what I will enjoy.
No, there's no coil made for a kiss,
Though melting, melting, melting bliss,
No shifting from the friendly cup,
But I may freely all take up.
And in each face, if I so please,
I'll court my own effigies.
Who would not then on this stage act Narcissus,
Where lively lips so sweetly say, come kiss us?

From THE WILLOW GARLAND

How many coronets of daffodilies,
Of purer roses and of Paphian lilies,
Wove thy false hope for her thou thoughtst thy own
When Fate was weaving willows for thy crown. . . .

IN COMMENDATION OF MUSIC

WHEN whispering strains do softly steal
With creeping passion through the heart,
And when at every touch we feel
Our pulses beat and bear a part;
 When threads can make
 A heartstring shake,
 Philosophy
 Can scarce deny
The soul consists of harmony.

When unto heavenly joy we feign
Whate'er the soul affecteth most,
Which only thus we can explain
By music of the winged host,
 Whose lays we think
 Make stars to wink,
 Philosophy
 Can scarce deny
Our souls consist of harmony.

O lull me, lull me, charming air,
My senses rock with wonder sweet;
Like snow on wool thy fallings are,
Soft, like a spirit's, are thy feet:
 Grief who need fear
 That hath an ear?
 Down let him lie
 And slumb'ring die
And change his soul for harmony.

UPON KIND AND TRUE LOVE

'Tis not how witty, nor how free,
Nor yet how beautiful she be,
But how much kind and true to me.
Freedom and wit none can confine,
And beauty like the sun doth shine,
But kind and true are only mine.

Let others with attention sit,
To listen, and admire her wit,
That is a rock where I'll not split.
Let others dote upon her eyes,
And burn their hearts for sacrifice,
Beauty's a calm where danger lies.

But kind and true have been long tried
A harbour where we may confide,
And safely there at anchor ride.
From change of winds there we are free,
And need not fear storm's tyranny,
Nor pirate, though a prince he be.

AN ADVENTURE

A BAND, a Bob-wig, and a Feather
Attacked a lady's heart together:
The Band in a most learned plea,
Made up of deep philosophy,
Told her, if she would please to wed
A reverend beard, and take, instead
 Of vigorous youth,
 Old solemn truth
With books and morals into bed,
How happy she would be.

The Bob, he talked of management,
What wondrous blessings Heaven sent
On care, and pains, and industry;
And truly he must be so free,
To own he thought your airy beaux,
With powdered wigs, and dancing shoes,
Were good for nothing (mend his soul!)
But prate, and talk, and play the fool.
He said 'twas wealth gave joy and mirth,
 And that to be the dearest wife
 Of one who laboured all his life
To make a mine of gold his own,
And not spend sixpence when he'd done,
 Was Heaven upon earth.

When these two blades had done, d'ye see,
The Feather (as it might be me)
Steps out, Sir, from behind the screen,
With such an air, and such a mien:

Look you, old gentleman! in short,
He quickly spoiled the statesman's sport,
It proved such charming weather,
That, you must know, at the first beck,
The lady leaped about his neck,
And off they went together.

THE SHOWER

WATERS above! eternal springs!
The dew that silvers the Dove's wings!
O welcome, welcome to the sad!
Give dry dust drink; drink that makes glad!
Many fair ev'nings, many flowers
Sweetened with rich and gentle showers,
Have I enjoyed, and down have run
Many a fine and shining sun;
But never, till this happy hour,
Was blest with such an evening-shower!

From THE WATER-FALL

WITH what deep murmurs through time's silent stealth
Doth thy transparent, cool and watery wealth
 Here flowing fall,
 And chide, and call,
As if his liquid loose retinue staid
Lingering, and were of this steep place afraid. . . .

TO AMORET

AMORET! the Milky Way
Framed of many nameless stars!
The smooth stream where none can say
He this drop to that prefers!

Amoret! my lovely foe!
Tell me where thy strength does lie?
Where the power that charms us so?
In thy soul, or in thy eye?

By that snowy neck alone,
Or thy grace in motion seen,
No such wonders could be done;
Yet thy waist is straight and clean
As Cupid's shaft, or Hermes' rod,
And powerful, too, as either god.

¹ Waller's enormous reputation has dwindled almost to nothing in the course of years. Contemporaries speak of his ease and polish, but nowadays "Go, lovely Rose" and the charming little poem printed above are oases in the desert of his collected verse.

(LINES WRITTEN IN PRISON)

I THAT erst while the world's sweet air did draw,
(Graced by the Fairest ever mortal saw)
Now closely pent, with walls of ruthless stone,
Consume my days and nights, and all alone.

When I was wont to sing of shepherd's loves,
My walks were fields and downs and hills and groves;
But now (alas) so strict is my hard doom,
Fields, downs, hills, groves and all's but one poor room.

Each morn' as soon as daylight did appear,
With Nature's music birds would charm mine ear;
Which now, instead of their melodious strains,
Hear rattling shackles, gyves and bolts and chains.

But though that all the world's delights forsake me,
I have a Muse and she shall music make me:
Whose airy note, in spite of closest cages,
Shall give content to me and after ages.

Nor do I pass for all this outward ill,
My heart's the same and undejected still;
And, which is more than some in freedom win,
I have true rest and peace and joy within.

ON A BANK AS I SATE A FISHING

THIS day dame Nature seemed in love;
The lusty sap began to move;
Fresh juice did stir th' embracing vines;
And birds had drawn their valentines.

The jealous trout, that low did lie,
Rose at a well-dissembled fly;
There stood my friend, with patient skill,
Attending of his trembling quill.

Already were the eyes possessed
With the swift pilgrim's daubed nest;
The groves already did rejoice,
In Philomel's triumphing voice.

The showers were short, the weather mild,
The morning fresh, the evening smiled.
Joan takes her new-rubbed pail and now
She trips to milk her sand-red cow;

Where for some sturdy football swain,
Joan strokes a syllabub or twain;
The fields and gardens were beset
With tulips, crocus, violet;

And now, though late, the modest rose
Did more than half a blush disclose.
Thus all looks gay and full of cheer,
To welcome the new-liveried year.

AGAINST FRUITION

THERE is not half so warm a fire
In the fruition as desire.
When I have got the fruit of pain
Possession makes me poor again:
Expected forms and shapes unknown
Whet and make sharp tentation.
Sense is too niggardly for bliss,
And pays me dully with what is;
But fancy's liberal and gives all
That can within her vastness fall.
Veil therefore still, while I divine
The treasure of this hidden mine,
And make imagination tell
What wonders doth in beauty dwell.

ON A GENTLEMAN

*In a Late Engagement against the Turks, was Slain
and Thrown Overboard, and She since Mad*

I'LL go to my Love where he lies in the deep,
And in my embraces my dearest shall sleep:
When we wake, the kind dolphins about us shall throng,
And in chariots of shell shall draw us along.
The orient pearl that the ocean bestows,
We'll mix with the coral, our crowns to compose.
Then the sea-nymphs shall grieve and envy our bliss,
We'll teach them to love, and the cockles to kiss.

For my Love sleeps now in his watery grave,
Has nothing to show for his tomb but a wave;
I'll kiss his dear lips, than the coral more red
That grows where he lies in his watery bed:

Ah! ah! ah! my Love is dead.

There was not a bell, but a tortoise-shell
To ring, to ring, to ring my Love's knell.
Ah, my Love's dead! There was not a bell
But a tortoise-shell to ring my Love's knell.

WE MUST NOT PART

WE must not part, as others do,
With sighs and tears, as we were two.
Though with these outward forms we part,
We keep each other in our heart.
What search hath found a being, where
I am not, if that thou be there?

True love hath wings, and can as soon
Survey the world, as sun or moon;
And everywhere our triumphs keep
Over absence, which makes others weep:
By which alone a power is given
To live on earth, as they in heaven.

HYMN TO PAN

HERE, there, within, without,
Everywhere is mighty Pan:
Search and ye shall find him out
Chiefly in the heart of man.

There he
Loves to be,
As in a temple bright,
Cleanly swept,
Purely kept
From polluting dregs of night.

Fire, air, the sea and earth,
Show the working of his hand:
Whence they all receive their birth,
And obey at his command.

They move
By his love
In due vicissitude:
But man
Only can
Boast his heart with him endued.

Bright stars, lightning and wind,
Who can tell us how they go?
But more difficult and blind
Are his secret ways to know:

Go then
Fire again
With warm enlightening rays;
Dance, sing,
Leap and spring
Ravished with his holy praise.

AN INCOMPARABLE KISS

GIVE me a kiss from those sweet lips of thine
And make it double by enjoining mine,
Another yet, nay yet another,
And let the first kiss be the second's brother.
Give me a thousand kisses and yet more;
And then repeat those that have gone before;
Let us begin while daylight springs in heaven,
And kiss till night descends into the even,
And when that modest secretary, night,
Discolours all but thy heaven-beaming light,
We will begin revels of hidden love
In that sweet orb where silent pleasures move.
In high, new strains, unspeakable delight,
We'll vent the dull hours of the silent night:
Were the bright day no more to visit us,
O, then for ever would I hold thee thus,
Naked, enchained, empty of idle fear,
As the first lovers in the garden were. . . .

Embrace me still, for time runs on before,
And being dead we shall embrace no more.
Let us kiss faster than the hours do fly,
Long live each kiss and never know to die.
Yet, if that fade and fly away too fast,
Impress another and renew the last;
Let us vie kisses, till our eyelids cover,
And if I sleep, count me an idle lover;
Admit I sleep, I'll still pursue the theme,
And eagerly I'll kiss thee in a dream.
O give me way: grant love to me thy friend!
Did hundred thousand suitors all contend

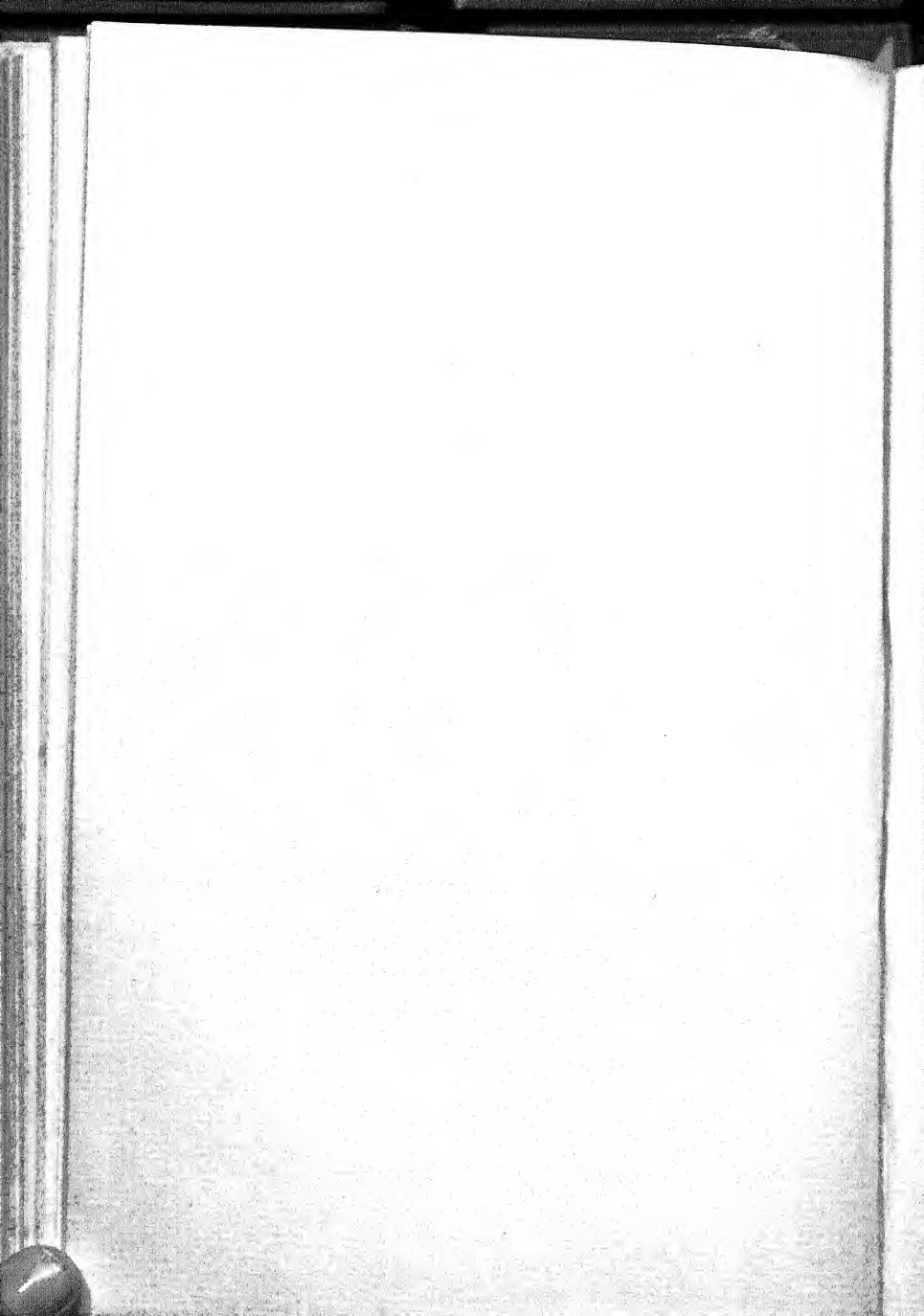
For thy virginity, there's none shall woo
With heart so firm as mine; none better do
Than I with your sweet sweetness; if you doubt,
Pierce with your eyes my heart or pluck it out.

(O EYES!)

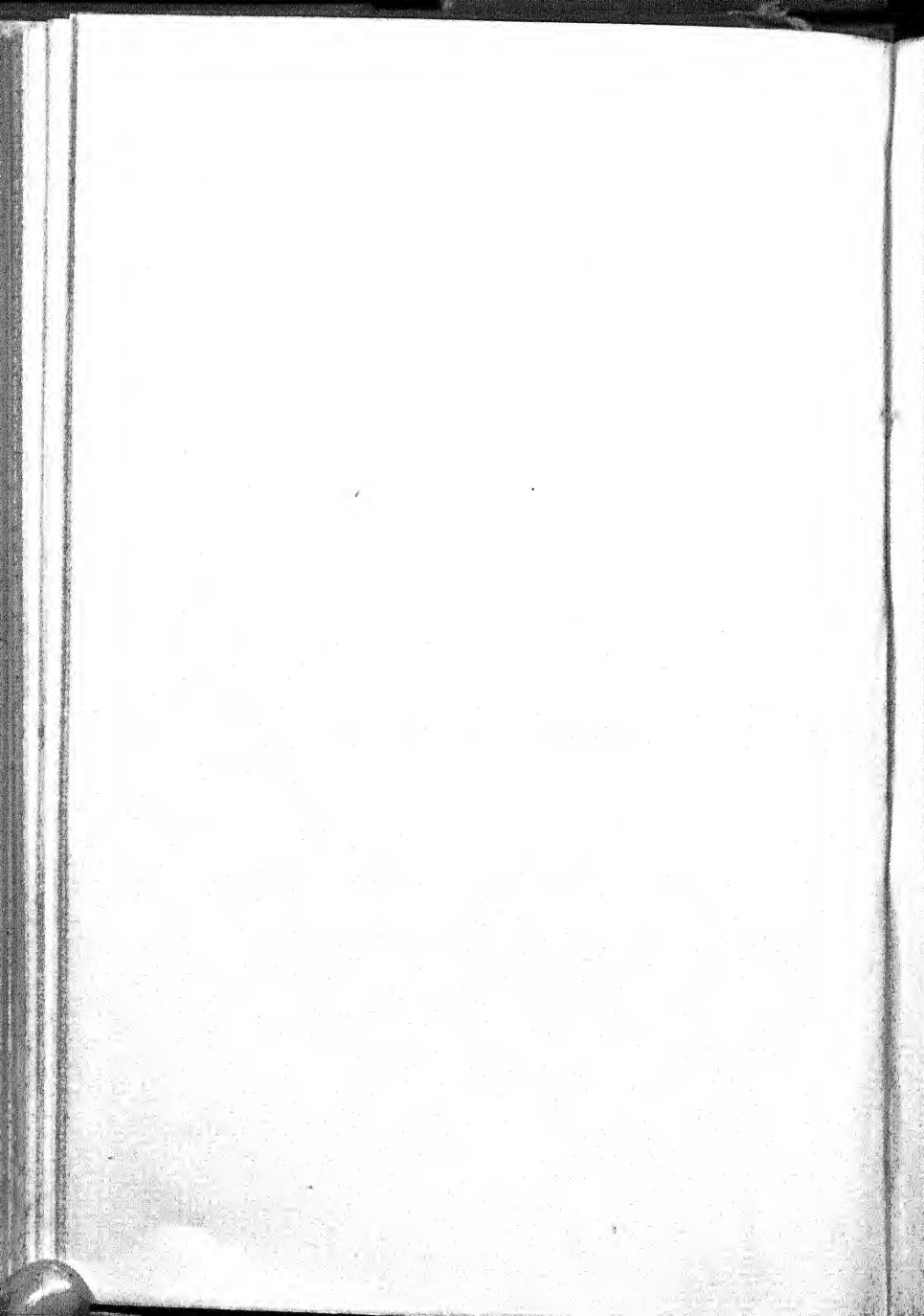
O EYES, what do you see?
O ears, what do you hear?
That makes you wish to be
All eyes or else all ear?
I see a face as fair
As man's eye ever saw,
I hear as sweet an air
As that which rocks did draw.
I wish, when in such wise
I see or hear the same,
I had all Argus' eyes
Or else the ears of fame.

EPITAPH ON PRINCE HENRY

Lo, now he shineth yonder,
A fixèd star in heaven,
Whose motion is under
None of the planets seven;
And if the sun should tender
The moon his love and marry,
They never could engender
So fair a star as Harry.



METAPHYSICAL VERSE



FOREWORD

THE peculiarities of Metaphysical Verse have received eloquent justification by modern critics. It is no longer necessary to apologise for the crabbedness of such poets as Donne and King, or for the bold haphazard brilliance of Crashaw and Marvell. We are not as far away from them in spirit as the eighteenth century. Johnson's majestic attack on the whole school, of which I have already quoted various sentences, still expresses an intelligible and honest point of view; but our standards have so changed during the interval that his strictures have now almost the ring of praise.

Some complaints, no doubt, we are bound to accept. Not all the extravagances of modern poetry can reconcile us to Crashaw's weeping Magdalen who follows her Lord's footsteps with lachrymose zeal:

*And now where'er he strays,
Among the Galilean mountains,
Or more unwelcome ways,
He's followed by two faithful fountains;
Two walking baths; two weeping motions;
Portable and compendious oceans . . .*

while Marvell's salmon-fishers, with their leathern coracles,

*And now the salmon-fishers moist
Their leathern boats begin to hoist;
And, like Antipodes in shoes,
Have shod their heads in their canoes . . .*

remain as monstrous as any of Herodotus' barbarian tribes.

Here, it is true, "the most heterogeneous images" are, indeed, "yoked by violence together". Mere whimsy has taken the place of imagination; but these curious, and often repeated, errors of judgment help to throw their surroundings into brighter relief. Of Taste, as the Augustan Age defined it, the Metaphysical Poets had little or none. Read, for example, Bishop King's famous *Exequy*. Anthologists who, like the editor of *The Oxford Book*, print the poem in an abbreviated form, omitting its more elaborate tropes and fancies, tend to distort our appreciation of King's genius. He was neither a Romantic nor a Classical writer; in its entirety, the effect of this strange work is derived from its ingenious combination of poignantly simple and learnedly remote images. It renders the accents of profound sorrow with the help of a pre-concerted rhetorical scheme.

Rhetoric and deep emotion are interfused. A reader, who, among the crowd at Paul's Cross, had stood listening to Donne's delivery of one of his sermons, would have had less difficulty, perhaps, than a modern critic in excusing the marriage of those two elements. They were not then mutually exclusive. King's personal grief at his wife's loss did not preclude him, when the time came to give it expression, from formalizing and lengthily developing the theme of widowhood. He triumphs by virtue of that sensibility which unifies and reconciles the discordant parts.

Transition and changes of tone are wonderfully smooth. We feel the weakness of the Metaphysical Poets as often as such changes are clumsy and harsh, and their strength when they are accomplished with easy skill. Many poems composed in the nineteenth century, even the best and the most generally admired, seem to be written without alteration of the inner tone and to be the products of a single poetic mood. Quite the opposite is true of seventeenth-century verse; Henry King in

The Exequy, Marvell in his *Coy Mistress*, Donne in almost everything he wrote, from his early lyrics to the religious sonnets of his later life, constantly alter speed and pitch and emotional intensity, as the emotion that dominates them ebbs and swells:

*But woe is me! the longest date
Too narrow is to calculate
These empty hopes: never shall I
Be so much blest as to descry
A glimpse of thee . . .*

drags beneath the burden of hopeless grief; a mood which is magically enlivened by the supernatural thrill of the last lines:

*But hark! My pulse like a soft drum
Beats my approach, tells thee I come . . .*

Then, once again, the excitement falls as it has arisen, and subsides on a note of acquiescence.

To return to Dr. Johnson's Olympian standpoint; I think that, without disrespect to that great man, we can demur at his accusation of insensibility. "They wrote," he observes, "rather as beholders than as partakers of human nature," with the result that "their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had never been said before." This is criticism which overshoots its mark; an excess, not a dearth, of sensibility, running riot in a multitude of extravagant shapes, an almost morbid acuteness of sense and emotion, must be imputed to the Metaphysical Poets; while the chilly *hauteur* that Johnson seems to have felt was, on the whole, more characteristic of his own age.

A further paragraph, though frequently cited, is worth transcribing. "Nor was the sublime," Johnson continues, "more within their reach than the pathetic; for they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. . . . Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. . . ."

Thus the bland and self-confident eighteenth century. Johnson's voice reaches us, with sonorous unction, from a period supremely sure of its splendid gifts, of the incontestable validity of its classic culture. Human knowledge had already reached its *apogee*; the world was planned and gardenized from end to end; whereas, for Donne, it was still chaotic and adventurous, lit up by wandering and smoky flares. This view of life is reflected in his work; no other poems that I have read make so startling and phantasmagoric an impression as the wild impetuous torrent of his verse, full of unexpected and luridly impressive images. He alternates Elizabethan realism

Powder's blue stains scattered on my skin . . .

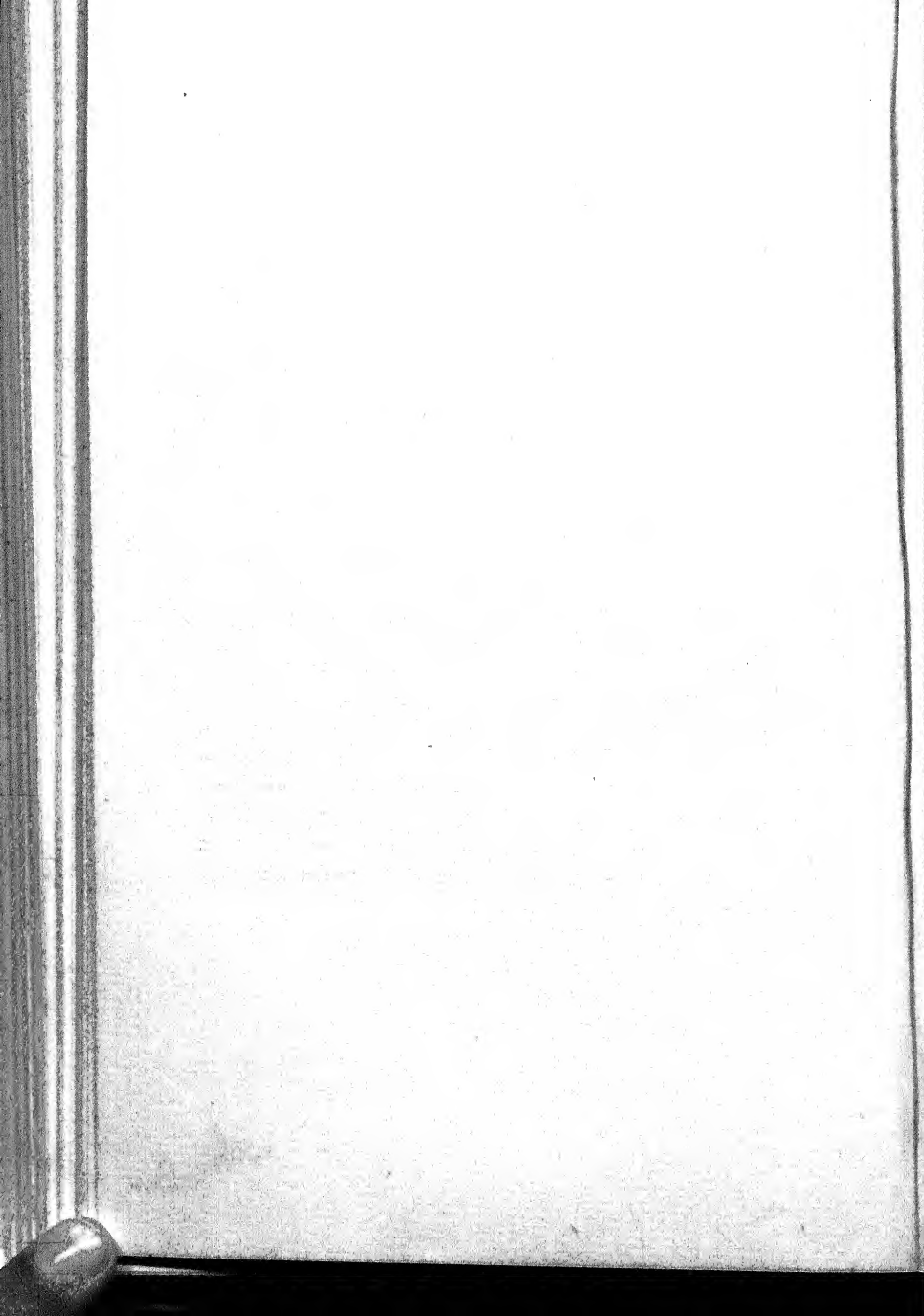
*Thy immortal mother which doth lie
Still buried in her bed, yet will not die . . .*

*The grim eight-foot-high iron-bound serving-man
That oft names God in oaths, and only then,
He that to bar the first gate doth as wide
As the great Rhodian Colossus stride . . .*

with outbursts of that speculative distemper which runs through his longer poems like a raging appetite.

Such was its repercussion upon his temperament. In Cowley, a far feeblar and smother poet—and it was at Cowley that Johnson's attack was chiefly aimed—the same interests that had goaded and emboldened Donne are spun out by conscious literary artifice. Cowley's was a ponderous scholastic mind; we are now concerned with him, less for his actual verse—melodious and gravely pleasing as it often is—than as a *littérateur* and the friend of contemporary poets. He had admired and been admired by Richard Crashaw; but, whereas the baroque exuberance of Crashaw's verse—at its best in the incomparable *Music's Duel*—perpetually overflows and exceeds its object, Cowley requires the assistance of a definite theme round which he can learnedly weave his poetic web.

There remains the question, why these poets are grouped together. Why do we speak of "Metaphysical" verse, as though the catch-phrase were in some way self-explanatory and specially designed for the various writers whom it denotes? One can only plead the want of a better term. Metaphysical verse, on close acquaintance, resolves itself into an attempt by certain writers to employ the jargon and symbolism of "modern" knowledge, and to stir the emotions by first stimulating a reader's mind. These experiments, out of fashion in the eighteenth century, are now once again understandable and sympathetic.



MARIA WENTWORTH

*Thomae Comitiss Cleveland filia praemortua
prima, virgineam animam exhaluit*

AND here the precious dust is laid,
Whose purely tempered clay was made
So fine, that it the guest betrayed.

Else the soul grew so fast within
It broke the outward shell of sin,
And so was hatched a cherubin.

In height, it soared to God above;
In depth, it did to knowledge move,
And spread in breadth to general love.

Before, a pious duty shined
To parents, courtesy behind,
On either side an equal mind.

Good to the poor, to kindred dear,
To servants kind, to friendship clear,
To nothing but herself severe.

So, though a virgin, yet a bride
To every grace, she justified
A chaste polygamy, and died.

Learn from hence (Reader) what small trust
We owe this world, where virtue must
Frail as our flesh crumble to dust.

From FALSEHOOD

STILL do the stars impart their light
To those that travel in the night;
Still time runs on, nor doth the hand
Or shadow on the dial stand;
The streams still glide and constant are:
 Only thy mind
 Untrue I find,
 Which carelessly
 Neglects to be
Like stream or shadow, hand or star.

Fool that I am; I do recall
My words, and swear thou'rt like them all:
Thou seem'st like stars to nourish fire,
But O how cold is thy desire!
And like the hand upon the brass
 Thou point'st at me
 In mockery;
 If I come nigh,
 Shade-like thou'lt fly,
And as the stream with murmur pass. . . .

A DREAM BROKE¹

As Nilus, sudden ebbing, here
Doth leave a scale and a scale there,
And somewhere else perhaps a fin,
Which by his stay had fishes been:
So dreams, which overflowing be,
Departing leave half things, which we
For their imperfectness can call
But joys i' th' fin, or in the scale.
If when her tears I haste to kiss
They dry up, and deceive my bliss,
May I not say the waters sink,
And cheat my thirst when I would drink?
If when her breasts I go to press,
Instead of them I grasp her dress,
May not I say the apples then
Are set down and snatched up again?
Sleep was not thus Death's brother meant;
'Twas made an ease, no punishment.
As, then, that's finished by the sun
Which Nile did only leave begun,
My fancy shall run o'er sleep's themes,
And so make up the web of dreams.
In vain, fleet shades, ye do contest:
Awaked howe'er, I'll think the rest.

¹ Founded, of course, on the superstition that the mud of the Nile spontaneously engendered life.

THE ISLAND

I

THEN like some wealthy island thou shalt lie;
And like the sea about it, I;
Thou like fair Albion, to the sailor's sight,
Spreading her beauteous bosom all in white:
Like the kind ocean I will be,
With loving arms for ever clasping thee.

II

But I'll embrace thee gentlier far than so;
As their fresh banks soft rivers do,
Nor shall the proudest planet boast a power
Of making my full love to ebb one hour;
It never dry or low can prove,
Whilst thy unwasted fountain feeds my love.

III

Such heat and vigour shall our kisses bear,
As if like doves we engendered there.
No bound nor rule my pleasures shall endure,
In love there's none too much an Epicure.
Nought shall my hands or lips control;
I'll kiss thee through, I'll kiss thy very soul.

IV

Yet nothing but the night our sports shall know;
Night that's both blind and silent too.
Alphæus found not a more secret trace,
His loved Sicilian fountain to embrace,
Creeping so far beneath the sea,
Than I will do t' enjoy and feast on thee.

V

Men, out of wisdom, women, out of pride,
The pleasant thefts of love do hide.
That may secure thee; but thou hast yet from me
A more infallible security.

For there's no danger I should tell
The joys which are to me unspeakable.

OF SOLITUDE.

Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good!
Hail, ye plebian underwood!
Where the poetic birds rejoice,
And for their quiet nests and plenteous food
Pay with their grateful voice.

Hail, the poor Muse's richest manor seat!
Ye country houses and retreat,
Which all the happy gods so love
That for you oft they quit their bright and great
Metropolis above.

Here Nature does a house for me erect,
Nature, the wisest architect,
Who those fond artists does despise
That can the fair and living trees neglect,
Yet the dead timber prize.

Here let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,
Hear the soft winds above me flying,
With all their wanton bough's dispute,
And the more tuneful birds to both replying,
Nor be myself too mute.

A silver stream shall roll his waters near,
Gilt with the sunbeams here and there;
On whose enamelled bank I'll walk,
And see how prettily they smile, and hear
How prettily they talk.

Ah wretched and too solitary he
Who loves not his own company!
He'll feel the weight of it many a day,
Unless he call in sin or vanity
To help to bear it away.

O Solitude, first state of humankind!
Which blest remained till man did find
Even his own helper's company—
As soon as two, alas, together joined,
The serpent made up three—

Though God Himself, through countless ages, thee
His sole companion, chose to be,
Thee, sacred Solitude, alone,
Before the branchy head of number's tree
Sprang from the trunk of One.

Thou, though men think thine an unactive part,
Dost break and tame the unruly heart,
Which else would know no settled pace,
Making it move, well managed by thy art,
With swiftness and with grace.

Thou the faint beams of reason's scattered light
Dost, like a burning-glass, unite,
Dost multiply the feeble heat
And fortify the strength, till thou dost bright
And noble fires beget.

Whilst this hard truth I teach, methinks I see
The monster London laugh at me;
I should at thee, too, foolish city,
If it were fit to laugh at misery,
But thy estate I pity.

Let but thy wicked men from out thee go,
And all the fools that crowd thee so,
Even thou, who dost thy millions boast,
A village less than Islington wilt grow,
A solitude almost.

MUSIC'S DUEL

Now westward sol had spent the richest beams
Of noon's high glory, when hard by the streams
Of Tiber, on the scene of a green plat,
Under protection of an oak, there sat
A sweet lute's master: in whose gentle airs
He lost the day's heat, and his own hot cares.

Close in the covert of the leaves there stood
A nightingale, come from the neighbouring wood:
(The sweet inhabitant of each glad tree,
Their Muse, their Syren, harmless Syren she)
There stood she listening, and did entertain
The music's soft report; and mould the same
In her own murmurs, that what ever mood
His curious fingers lent, her voice made good.
The man perceived his rival, and her art,
Disposed to give the light-foot lady sport,
Awakes his lute, and 'gainst the fight to come
Informs it, in a sweet prelude
Of closer strains, and ere the war begin,
He lightly skirmishes on every string
Charged with a flying touch; and straightway she
Carves out her dainty voice as readily,
Into a thousand sweet distinguished tones,
And reckons up in soft divisions
Quick volumes of wild notes; to let him know
By that shrill taste, she could do something too.

His nimble hands' instinct then taught each string
A capering cheerfulness; and made them sing
To their own dance; now negligently rash
He throws his arm and with a long drawn dash

Blends all together, then distinctly trips
From this to that, then quick returning skips
And snatches this again, and pauses there.
She measures every measure, everywhere
Meets art with art; sometimes, as if in doubt,
Not perfect yet, and fearing to be out,
Trails her plain ditty in one long spun note,
Through the sleek passage of her open throat;
A clear unwrinkled song; then doth she point it
With tender accents, and severely joint it
By short diminutives, that being reared
In controverting warbles evenly shared,
With her sweet self she wrangles; he amazed
That from so small a channel should be raised
The torrent of a voice, whose melody
Could melt into such sweet variety,
Strains higher yet, that tickled with rare art
The tatling strings (each breathing in his part)
Most kindly do fall out, the grumbling base
In surly groans disdains the treble's grace;
The high-perched treble chirps at this, and chides,
Until his finger (moderator) hides
And closes the sweet quarrel, rousing all,
Hoarse, shrill, at once; as when the trumpets call
Hot Mars to th' harvest of death's field, and woo
Men's hearts into their hands; this lesson too
She gives him back; her supple breast thrills out
Sharp airs, and staggers in a warbling doubt
Of dallying sweetness, hovers o'er her skill,
And folds in waved notes, with a trembling bill.
The pliant series of her slippery song;
Then starts she suddenly into a throng
Of short thick sobs, whose thund'ring volleys float,

And roll themselves over her lubric throat
In panting murmurs, 'stilled out of her breast,
That ever-bubbling spring, the sugared nest
Of her delicious soul, that there does lie
Bathing in streams of liquid melody;
Music's best seed-plot; whence in ripened airs
A golden-headed harvest fairly rears
His honey-dropping tops, ploughed by her breath
Which there reciprocally laboureth.
In that sweet soil; it seems a holy quire
Founded to th' name of great Apollo's lyre;
Whose silver roof rings with the sprightly notes
Of sweet-lipped angel-imps, that swill their throats
In cream of morning Helicon, and then
Prefer soft anthems to the ears of men,
To woo them from their beds, still murmuring
That men can sleep while they their matins sing:
(Most divine service) whose so early lay
Prevents the eye-lids of the blushing day.
There you might hear her kindle her soft voice,
In the close murmur of a sparkling noise,
And lay the ground-work of her hopeful song,
Still keeping in the forward stream, so long
Till a sweet whirlwind (striving to get out)
Heaves her soft bosom, wanders round about,
And makes a pretty earthquake in her breast,
Till the fledged notes at length forsake their nest;
Fluttering in wanton shoals, and to the sky,
Winged with their own wild echoes, prattling fly.
She opes the floodgate, and lets loose a tide
Of streaming sweetness, which in state doth ride
On the waved back of every swelling strain,
Rising and falling in a pompous train;

And while she thus discharges a shrill peal
Of flashing airs, she qualifies their zeal
With the cool epode of a graver note,
Thus high, thus low, as if her silver throat
Would reach the brazen voice of war's hoarse bird;
Her little soul is ravished; and so poured
Into loose ecstasies, that she is placed
Above herself, music's enthusiast.

Shame now and anger mixed a double stain
In the musician's face: "Yet once again
(Mistress) I come; now reach a strain, my lute,
Above her mock, or be for ever mute.
Or tune a song of victory to me,
Or to thyself sing thine own obsequy!"
So said, his hands sprightly as fire he flings,
And with a quavering coyness tastes the strings.
The sweet-lipped sisters musically frightened,
Singing their fears, are fearfully delighted:
Trembling as when Apollo's golden hairs
Are fanned and frizzled in the wanton airs
Of his own breath, which married to his lyre
Doth tune the spheres and make Heaven's self look higher.
From this to that, from that to this he flies,
Feels music's pulse in all her arteries,
Caught in a net which there Apollo spreads,
His fingers struggle with the vocal threads.
Following those little rills, he sinks into
A sea of Helicon; his hand does go
Those parts of sweetness which with nectar drop,
Softer than that which pants in Hebe's cup:
The humorous strings expound his learned touch
By various glosses; now they seem to grutch,
And murmur in a buzzing din, then jingle

In shrill-tongued accents, striving to be single;
Every smooth turn, every delicious stroke,
Gives life to some new grace; thus doth h'invoke
Sweetness by all her names: thus, bravely thus,
(Fraught with a fury so harmonious)
The lute's light genius now does proudly rise,
Heaved on the surges of swoll'n rhapsodies,
Whose flourish (meteor-like) doth curl the air
With flash of high-born fancies, here and there
Dancing in lofty measures, and anon
Creeps on the soft touch of a tender tone,
Whose trembling murmurs melting in wild airs,
Runs to and fro, complaining his sweet cares;
Because those precious mysteries that dwell
In music's ravished soul he dare not tell,
But whisper to the world: thus do they vary,
Each string his note, as if they meant to carry
Their master's blest soul (snatched out at his ears
By a strong ecstasy) through all the spheres
Of music's heaven; and seat it there on high
In the empyreum of pure harmony.
At length, (after so long, so loud a strife
Of all the strings, still breathing the best life
Of blest variety attending on
His fingers' fairest revolution,
In many a sweet rise, many as sweet a fall)
A full mouthed diapason swallows all.

This done, he lists what she would say to this,
And she, although her breath's late exercise
Had dealt too roughly with her tender throat,
Yet summons all her sweet powers for a note;
Alas! in vain! for while (sweet soul) she tries
To measure all those wild diversities,

Of chattering strings, by the small size of one
Poor simple voice, raised in a natural tone;
She fails, and failing grieves, and grieving dies;
She dies; and leaves her life the victor's prize,
Falling upon his lute; O fit to have,
(That lived so sweetly) dead, so sweet a grave!

THE DREAM

No victor, when in battle spent,
When he at night asleep doth lie,
Rich in a conquered monarch's tent,
E'er had so vain a dream as I.

Methought I saw the earliest shade,
And sweetest that the Spring can spread,
Of jesmyn, briar, and woodbine made,
And there I saw Clorinda dead.

Though dead she lay, yet could I see
No cypress nor no mourning yew,
Nor yet the injured lover's tree;
No willow near her coffin grew.

But all showed unconcerned to be,
As if just Nature there did strive
To seem as pitiless as she
Was to her lover when alive.

And now methought I lost all care
In losing her, and was as free
As birds let loose into the air,
Of rivers that are got to sea.

Methought love's monarchy was gone;
And whilst elective numbers sway
Our Choice, and change makes power our own,
And those court us whom we obey.

Yet soon, now from my princess free,
I rather frantic grew than glad:
For subjects, getting liberty,
Get but a licence to be mad.

Birds that are long in cages awed,
If they get out, a while will roam,
But straight want skill to live abroad,
Then pine and hover near their home.

And to the ocean rivers run
From being pent in banks of flowers,
Not knowing that th' exhaling sun
Will send them back in weeping showers.

Soon thus for pride of liberty
I low desires of bondage found;
And vanity of being free
Bred the discretion to be bound.

But as dull subjects see too late
Their safety in monarchal reign,
Finding their freedom in a state
Is but proud strutting in a chain.

Then growing wiser, when undone,
In winter's nights sad stories sing
In praise of monarchs long since gone,
To whom their bells they yearly ring;

So now I mourned that she was dead,
Whose single power did govern me,
And quickly was by reason led
To find the harm of liberty.

In love's free state, where many sway,
Number to change our hearts prepares,
And but one fetter takes away,
To lay a world of handsome snares.

And I, love's secretary now,
(Rayed in my dream to that grave style)
The dangers of love's state to show,
Wrote to the lovers of this isle.

For lovers correspond, and each,
Though statesman-like he th' other hate,
Yet slily one another teach
By civil love to save the state.

And as in interreign men draw
Power to themselves of doing right,
When generous reason, not the law,
They think restrains their appetite;

Even so, the lovers of this land
(Love's empire in Clorinda gone)
Thought they were quit from love's command
And beauty's world was all their own.

But lovers (who are Nature's best
Old subjects) never long revolt;
They soon in passion's war contest,
Yet in their march soon make a halt.

And those (when by my mandates brought
Near dead Clorinda) ceased to boast
Of freedom found, and wept for thought
Of their delightful bondage lost.

And now the day to night was turned,
Or sadly night's close mourning wore;
All maids for one another mourned,
That lovers now could love no more.

All lovers quickly did perceive
They had on earth no more to do,
But civilly to take their leave
As worthies that to dying go.

And now all quires her dirges sing,
In shades of cypress and of yew;
The bells of every temple ring,
Where maids their withered garlands strew.

To such extremes did sorrow rise
That it transcended speech and form,
And was so lost to ears and eyes
As seamen sinking in a storm.

My soul, in sleep's soft fetters bound,
Did now for vital freedom strive;
And straight, by horror waked, I found
The fair Clorinda still alive.

Yet she's to me but such a light
As are the stars to those who know
We can at most but guess their height
And hope they mind us here below.

THE APPARITION

WHEN by thy scorn, O murtheress, I am dead,
And that thou think'st thee free
From all solicitation from me,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, feigned vestal, in worse arms shall see;
Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,
And he, whose thou art then, being tired before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleep will from thee shrink,
And then poor aspen wretch, neglected thou,
Bathed in a cold quicksilver sweat, wilt lie
A verier ghost than I;
What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,
I'd rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
Than by my threatenings rest still innocent.

THE ECSTASY

WHERE, like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant bank swelled up, to rest
The violet's reclining head,
Sat we two, one another's best.
Our hands were firmly cemented
With a fast balm, which thence did spring,
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes, upon one double string;

So t' intergraft our hands, as yet
Was all the means to make us one,
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation.
As 'twixt two equal armies, Fate
Suspends uncertain victory,
Our souls (which to advance their state,
Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her and me.
And whilst our souls negotiate there,
We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day the same our postures were,
And we said nothing, all the day.
If any, so by love refined,
That he soul's language understood,
And by good love were grown all mind,
Within convenient distance stood,
He (though he knew not which soul spake,
Because both meant, both spake the same)
Might thence a new concoction take,
And part far purer than he came.
This ecstasy doth unperplex
(We said) and tell us what we love,
We see by this, it was not sex,
We see, we saw not what did move:
But as all several souls contain
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love these mixed souls doth mix again,
And makes both one, each this and that.
A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour, and the size,
(All which before was poor and scant,)
Redoubles still, and multiplies.

When love, with one another so
Interinanimates two souls,
That abler soul, which thence doth flow,
Defects of loneliness controls.
We then, who are this new soul, know
Of what we are composed and made,
For th' atomies of which we grow
Are souls, whom no change can invade.
But O alas, so long, so far
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They are ours, though they are not we, we are
The intelligences, they the sphere.
We owe them thanks, because they thus
Did us to us at first convey,
Yielded their forces, sense, to us,
Nor are dross to us, but allay.
On man heaven's influence works not so,
But that it first imprints the air,
So soul into the soul may flow,
Though it to body first repair.
As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot, which makes us man:
So must pure lovers' souls descend
T' affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great prince in prison lies.
To our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love revealed may look;
Loves' mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.

And if some lover, such as we,
Have heard this dialogue of one,
Let him still mark us, he shall see
Small change, when we're to bodies gone.

ON HIS MISTRESS

By our first strange and fatal interview,
By all desires which thereof did ensue,
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
Which my words' masculine persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts, which spies and rivals threatened me,
I calmly beg: but by thy father's wrath,
By all pains, which want and divorcement hath,
I conjure thee, and all the oaths which I
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy,
Here I unswear, and overswear them thus,
Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.
Temper, O fair Love, love's impetuous rage,
Be my true mistress still, not my feigned page;
I'll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind
Thee, only worthy to nurse in my mind
Thirst to come back; O if thou die before,
My soul from other lands to thee shall soar.
Thy (else almighty) beauty cannot move
Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love,
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness; thou hast read
How roughly he in pieces shivered
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he loved.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have proved

Dangers unurged; feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one in th' other be.
Dissemble nothing, not a boy, nor change
Thy body's habit, nor mind's; be not strange
To thy self only; all will spy in thy face
A blushing womanly discovering grace;
Richly clothed apes are called apes, and as soon
Eclipsed as bright we call the moon the moon.
Men of France, changeable Camelions,
Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company
Of players, which upon the world's stage be,
Will quickly know thee, and no less, alas!
Th' indifferent Italian, as we pass
His warm land, well content to think thee page,
Will hunt thee with such lust and hideous rage
As Lot's fair guests were vexed. But none of these
Nor spongy hydroptic Dutch shall thee displease,
If thou stay here. O stay here, for, for thee
England is only a worthy gallery,
To walk in expectation, till from thence
Our greatest King call thee to his presence.
When I am gone, dream me some happiness,
Nor let thy looks our long hid love confess,
Nor praise, nor dispraise me, nor bless nor curse
Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight's startings, crying out, oh, oh
Nurse, O my love is slain, I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him I,
Assailed, fight, taken, stabbed, bleed, fall, and die.
Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me to have had thy love.

THE GOOD-MORROW

I WONDER by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then
But sucked on country pleasures, childishy?
Or snorted we in the seven sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres
Without sharp North, without declining West?
What ever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one, or thou and I
Love so alike that none do slacken, none can die.

AIR AND ANGELS

TWICE or thrice had I loved thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame,
Angels affect us oft, and worshipped be;
Still, when, to where thou wert, I came,
Some lovely glorious nothing I did see,
But since my soul, whose child love is,
Takes limbs of flesh, and else could nothing do,
More subtle than the parent is,
Love must not be, but take a body too,
And therefore what thou wert, and who,
I bid Love ask, and now
That it assume thy body, I allow,
And fix itself in thy lip, eye, and brow.

Whilst thus to ballast love, I thought,
And so more steadily to have gone,
With wares which would sink admiration,
I saw, I had love's pinnace overfraught;
Every thy hair for love to work upon
Is much too much, some fitter must be sought;
For, nor in nothing, nor in things
Extreme, and scattering bright, can love inhere;
Then as an angel, face and wings
Of air, not pure as it, yet pure doth wear,
So thy love may be my love's sphere;
Just such disparity
As is twixt air and angel's purity,
'Twixt women's love, and men's will ever be.

A VALEDICTION: OF WEEPING

LET me pour forth
My tears before thy face, whilst I stay here,
For thy face coins them, and thy stamp they bear,
And by this mintage they are something worth,
For thus they be
Pregnant of thee;
Fruits of much grief they are, emblems of more,
When a tear falls, that thou fallst which it bore,
So thou and I are nothing then, when on a divers shore.

On a round ball
A workman that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, all,
So doth each tear,
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, yea world by that impression grow,
Till thy tears mixed with mine do overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolvèd so.

O more than Moon,
Draw not up seas to drown me in thy sphere,
Weep me not dead, in thine arms, but forbear
To teach the sea, what it may do too soon;
Let not the wind
Example find,
To do me more harm, than it purposeth;
Since thou and I sigh one another's breath,
Whoe'er sighs most is cruellest, and hastes the other's death.

LOVE'S ALCHEMY

SOME that have deeper digged love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie:

I have loved, and got, and told,
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
I should not find that hidden mystery;

Oh, 'tis imposture all:
And as no chemic yet th' elixir got,
But glorifies his pregnant pot,
If by the way to him befall
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,
So, lovers dream a rich and long delight,
But get a winter-seeming summer's night.

Our ease, our thrift, our honour, and our day,
Shall we, for this vain bubble's shadow pay?

Ends love in this, that my man
Can be as happy as I can; if he can
Endure the short scorn of a bridegroom's play?

That loving wretch that swears
'Tis not the bodies marry, but the minds,
Which he in her angelic finds,

Would swear as justly that he hears
In that day's rude hoarse minstrelsy, the spheres.

Hope not for mind in women; at their best
Sweetness and wit, they are but mummy, possessed.

THE SYMPATHY

Soul of my soul! it cannot be
That you should weep, and I from tears be free.
All the vast room between both poles
Can never dull the sense of souls
 Knit in so fast a knot.
Oh! can you grieve, and think that I
Can feel no smart because not nigh,
 Or that I know it not?

They're heretic thoughts. Two lutes are strung
And on a table tuned alike for song;
Strike one, and that which none did touch
Shall sympathizing sound as much
 As that which touched you see.
Think then this world, which heaven inrolls,
Is but a table round, and souls
 More apprehensive be.

Know they, that in their grossest parts
Mix by their hallowed loves entwined hearts,
This privilege boast, that no remove
Can e'er infringe their sense of love.
 Judge hence then our estate,
Since when we love there was not put
Two earthen hearts in one breast, but
 Two souls co-animate.

WHEN, DEAREST, I BUT THINK ON THEE

WHEN, dearest, I but think on thee,
Methinks all things that lovely be
Are present, and my soul delighted:
For beauties that from worth arise
Are, like the grace of deities,
Still present with us, though unsighted.

Thus while I sit and sigh the day
With all his spreading lights away,
Till night's black wings do overtake me:
Thinking on thee, thy beauties then,
As sudden lights do sleeping men,
So they by their bright rays awake me.

Thus absence dies, and dying proves
No absence can consist with loves
That do partake of fair perfection:
Since in the darkest night they may
By their quick motion find a way
To see each other by reflection.

The waving sea can with such flood
Bathe some high palace that hath stood
Far from the main up in the river:
Oh, think not then but love can do
As much, for that's an ocean too,
That flows not every day, but ever.

AN EPICUREAN ODE

SINCE that this thing we call the world,
By chance on atoms is begot,
Which, though in daily motions hurled,
Yet weary not;
How doth it prove
Thou art so fair and I in love?

Since that the soul doth only lie
Immersed in matter, chained in sense,
How can, Romira, thou and I
With both dispense?
And then ascend
In higher flights than wings can lend?

Since man's but pasted up of earth,
And ne'er was cradled in the skies,
What *terra Lemnia* gave thee birth?
What diamonds, eyes?
Or thou alone,
To tell what others were, came down?

SONNET TO BLACK ITSELF

THOU Black, wherein all colours are composed,
And unto which they all at last return,
Thou colour of the sun where it doth burn,
And shadow, where it cools; in thee is closed
Whatever nature can, or hath disposed
In any other hue; from thee do rise
Those tempers and complexions, which disclosed
As parts of thee do work as mysteries
Of that thy hidden power; when thou dost reign,
The characters of fate shine in the skies,
And tell us what the Heavens do ordain;
But when earth's common light shines to our eyes
Thou so retir'st thyself, that thy disdain
All revelation unto man denies.

TO THE UNCONSTANT CYNTHIA

TELL me once, dear, how does it prove
That I so much forsworn could be?
I never swore always to love
I only vowed still to love thee:
And art thou now what thou wert then,
Unsworn unto by other men?

In thy fair breath, and once fair soul,
I thought my vows were writ alone;
But others' oaths so blurred the scroll,
That I no more could read my own.
And am I still obliged to pay,
When you had thrown the bond away?

Now must we only part in joy,
Our tears as well must be unkind:
Weep you that could such truth destroy,
And I, that could such falseness find.
Thus we must unconcerned remain
In our divided joys and pain.

Yet we may love, but on this different score,
You what I am, I what you were before.

THE EXEQUY

ACCEPT, thou shrine of my dead saint,
Instead of dirges this complaint;
And for sweet flowers to crown thy hearse
Receive a strew of weeping verse
From thy grieved friend, whom thou might'st see
Quite melted into tears for thee.

Dear loss! since thy untimely fate
My task hath been to meditate
On thee, on thee: thou art the book,
The library whereon I look
Though almost blind. For thee (loved clay)
I languish out, not live, the day,
Using no other exercise
But what I practise with mine eyes:
By which wet glasses I find out
How lazily time creeps about
To one that mourns: this, only this,
My exercise and business is:
So I compute the weary hours
With sighs dissolvèd into showers.

Nor wonder if my time go thus,
Backward and most preposterous;
Thou hast benighted me; thy set
This eve of blackness did beget,
Who wast my day, (though overcast
Before thou had'st thy noontide past)
And I remember must in tears,
Thou scarce had'st seen so many years

As day tells hours. By thy clear sun
My love and fortune first did run;
But thou wilt never more appear
Folded within my hemisphere,
Since both thy light and motion
Like a fled star is fall'n and gone,
And twixt me and my soul's dear wish
The earth now interposèd is,
Which such a strange eclipse doth make
As ne'er was read in almanake.

I could allow thee for a time
To darken me and my sad clime,
Were it a month, a year, or ten,
I would thy exile live till then,
And all that space my mirth adjourn,
So thou wouldst promise to return,
And putting off thy ashy shroud
At length disperse this sorrow's cloud.

But woe is me! the longest date
Too narrow is to calculate
These empty hopes: never shall I
Be so much blest as to descry
A glimpse of thee, till that day come
Which shall the earth to cinders doom,
And a fierce fever must calcine
The body of this world, like thine.
(My little world!) That fit of fire
Once off, our bodies shall aspire
To our soul's bliss: then shall we rise
And view ourselves with clearer eyes

In that calm region, where no night
Can hide us from each other's sight.

Meantime, thou hast her, earth: much good
May my harm do thee. Since it stood
With Heaven's will I might not call
Her longer mine, I give thee all
My short-lived right and interest
In her, whom living I loved best:
With a most free and bounteous grief.
I give thee what I could not keep.
Be kind to her, and prithee look
Thou write into thy doomsday book
Each parcel of this rarity
Which in thy casket shrined doth lie:
See that thou make thy reck'ning straight
And yield her back again by weight;
For thou must audit on thy trust
Each grain and atom of this dust,
As thou wilt answer Him that lent,
Not gave thee, my dear monument.
So close the ground, and 'bout her shade
Black curtains draw; my bride is laid.

Sleep on, my Love, in thy cold bed,
Never to be disquieted!
My last good-night! Thou wilt not wake
Till I thy fate shall overtake:
Till age, or grief, or sickness, must
Marry my body to that dust
It so much loves, and fill the room
My heart keeps empty in thy tomb.
Stay for me there; I will not fail
To meet thee in that hollow vale.

And think not much of my delay;
I am already on the way,
And follow thee with all the speed
Desires can make, or sorrows breed.
Each minute is a short degree,
And ev'ry hour a step towards thee.
At night when I betake to rest,
Next morn I rise nearer my West
Of life, almost by eight hours' sail,
Than when sleep breathed his drowsy gale.

Thus from the Sun my bottom steers,
And my day's compass downward bears:
Nor labour I to stem the tide
Through which to thee I swiftly glide.
'Tis true, with shame and grief I yield,
Thou like the van first took'st the field,
And gotten hast the victory
In thus adventuring to die
Before me, whose more years might crave
A just precedence in the grave.
But hark! My pulse like a soft drum
Beats my approach, tells thee I come;
And slow howe'er my marches be,
I shall at last sit down by thee.

The thought of this bids me go on,
And wait my dissolution
With hope and comfort. Dear (forgive
The crime) I am content to live
Divided, with but half a heart,
Till we shall meet and never part.

From MAGNIFICENCE UNDER GROUND

IN that deep gulf, where all past times are thrown,
Where waning moons and setting suns are gone;
There months and days, extinguishing their light,
Are lost and buried in eternal night:
Our fathers' ages and our youth there cast,
Our yesterdays and their thousand years past. . . .

Were there a globe, in which we all could see
The world reversed, in Fate's geography;
Could we the ancients' drowned lands all there view,
And with them, all their buried treasure too;
The vast plantations of all ages dead,
The fallen towers and towns in ruins spread;
The cities, and inhabitants, there thrust,
Cities now measuring new bounds in dust,
And with their suburbs stretching by degrees
Until they border on th' Antipodes . . .
Compared with this dark globe of all below,
How small a point would this globe of ours show!

TO HIS COY MISTRESS

HAD we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood:
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow.
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze.
Two hundred to adore each breast;
But thirty thousand to the rest.
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state;
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity:
And your quaint honour turn to dust;
And into ashes all my lust.

The grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapt power.
Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness, up into one ball:
And tear our pleasures with rough strife,
Thorough the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

THAT NONE BEGUILÈD BE

THAT none beguilèd be by Time's quick flowing,
Lovers have in their hearts a clock still going;
For though Time be nimble, his motions
Are quicker,
And thicker,
Where Love hath his notions.

Hope is the mainspring on which moves desire,
And these do the less wheels, fear, joy, inspire.
The balance is thought, evermore
Clicking,
And striking,
And ne'er giving o'er.

Occasion's the hand, which still's moving round,
Till by it the critical hour may be found;
And when that falls out, it will strike
Kisses,
Strange blisses,
And what you best like.

ON NEWS

I

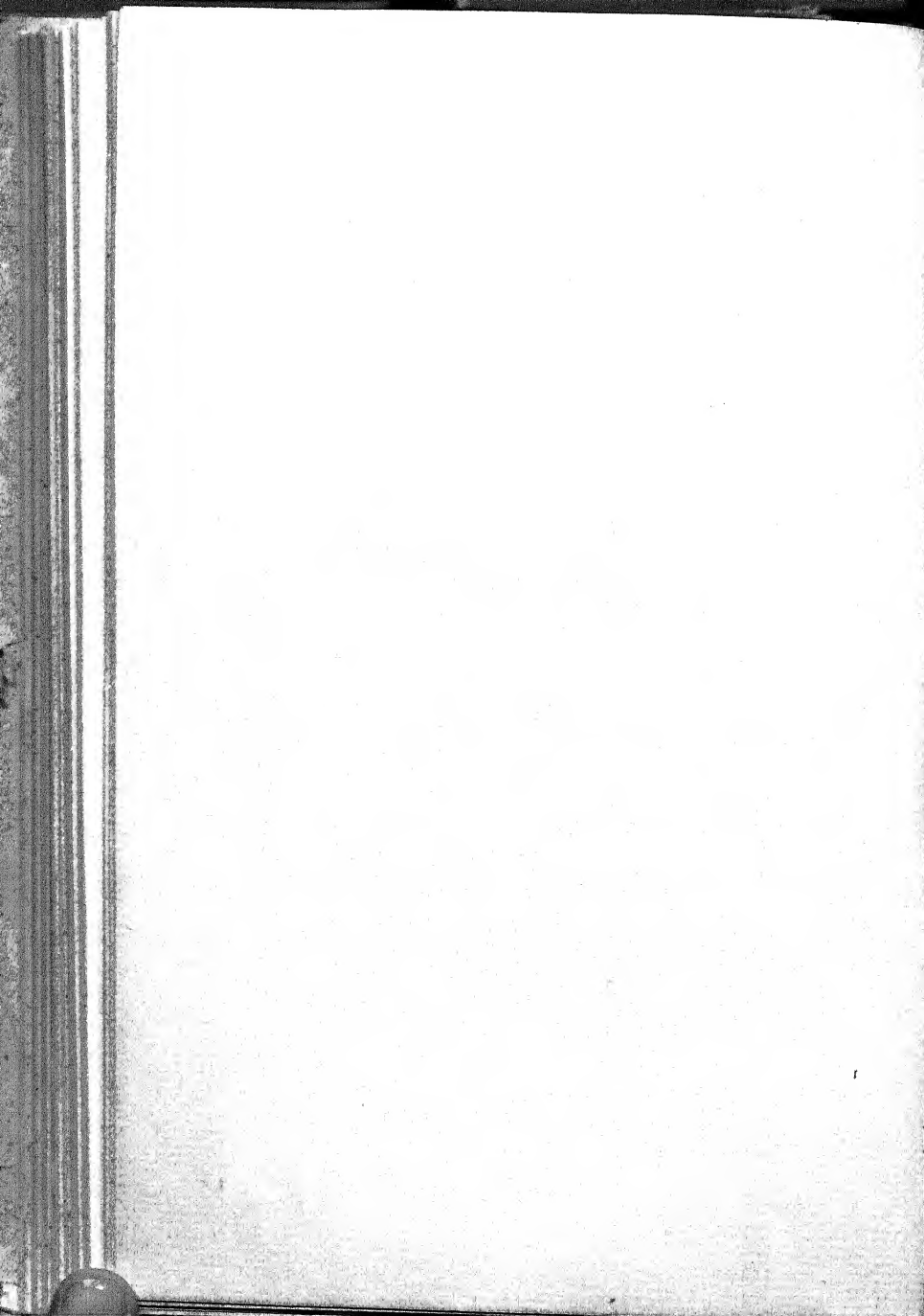
News from a foreign country came,
As if my treasure and my wealth lay there:
So much it did my heart enflame
'Twas wont to call my soul into mine ear,
Which thither went to meet
The approaching sweet,
And on the threshold stood,
To entertain the unknown good.
It hovered there
As if 'twould leave mine ear,
And was so eager to embrace
The joyful tidings as they came,
'Twould almost leave its dwelling-place,
To entertain that same.

II

As if the tidings were the things,
My very joys themselves, my foreign treasure,
Or else did bear them on their wings;
With so much joy they came, with so much pleasure.
My soul stood at that gate
To recreate
Itself with bliss: and to
Be pleased with speed. A fuller view
It fain would take,
Yet journeys back would make
Unto my heart: as if t'would fain
Go out to meet, yet stay within
To fit a place, to entertain,
And bring the tidings in.

III

What sacred instinct did inspire
My soul in childhood with a hope so strong?
What secret force moved my desire
To expect my joys beyond the seas, so young?
Felicity I knew
Was out of view:
And being here alone,
I saw that happiness was gone
From me! For this,
I thirsted absent bliss,
And thought that sure beyond the seas,
Or else in something near at hand
I knew not yet, (since nought did please
I knew) my bliss did stand. . . .



DEVOTIONAL VERSE

FOREWORD

ENGLAND, except during the seventeenth century, has not been prolific of religious poets. Elizabethan pietism is almost medieval, while the religious verse produced by the Augustan Age has either a somewhat nonconformist twang or recalls a period of roomy pews and resilient kneeling-cushions. It may express its traditional faith with the utmost dignity; but then the *sine qua non* of religious literature is that it should persuade us that a new experience has been enjoyed. Passive belief makes for pietistic versifying; a belief must be active to beget poetry.

It must be energetic as the troubled fervour of the Dean of St. Paul's. Donne had long hesitated to accept the priesthood, but, having accepted it, made it his whole life, poured into it all his passion and all his eloquence. His sermons are somewhere spoken of by a contemporary as committing "holy rapes upon the Will"—an image which, in view of his previous record and his own habit of employing sexual symbolism:

*Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you' enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

—strikes a reader as quite uncomfortably exact. Divinity, he used to say, was the wife of his age; poetry had been the mistress of his youth. But, after all, did he really change his bed-fellow? He may have sanctified their union on taking orders; it remained, none the less, a perfervid alliance.

He was still eccentric and impassioned, moody and odd. Donne was born in 1573; he died in 1631; and a year later a very different religious poet followed him, less demonstratively,

into the shades. By comparison, George Herbert was a young man; his life, on the whole, had been calm and orderly, but he had not resigned the world without appreciating it, since he had a fondness for good company and fine clothes and all the sensuous gratifications of his place and period:

*I know the ways of Pleasure, the sweet strains,
The lullings and the relishes of it;
The propositions of hot blood and brains;
What mirth and music mean; what Love and Wit
Have done these twenty hundred years and more;
I know the projects of unbridled store:
My stuff is flesh, not brass; my senses live,
And grumble oft that they have more in me
Than He that curbs them, being but one to five:
Yet I love Thee.*

His verse abounds in hints of rebellion:

*I struck the board, and cried, No more;
I will abroad.
What shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free; free as the road,
Loose as the wind, as large as store;
Shall I be still in suit?
Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me blood, and not restore
What I have lost with cordial fruit?*

—but always, as at the end of that magnificent poem, faith returns like a halcyon to quell the storm:

*But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methought I heard one calling "Child";
And I replied, "My Lord".*

Herbert's piety is distinguished by a certain *bienséance*. Donne may be rhetorical and turgid; Henry Vaughan woolly and diffuse; Crashaw may topple over into hyperbole; but Herbert, gentle and self-collected, remains the aristocrat who had been a dandy and a scholar. He is vehement but seldom or never violent. Unlike Vaughan, he does not suddenly attract attention by some beautiful and musically expressed image; his methods are as subdued as his personality, as subtly modulated as the piety which they exhale.

Vaughan is a poet of images, first and foremost. Born in 1622, brother to Thomas Vaughan, the alchemist, and by him involved in the atmosphere of contemporary platonism, he studied in London, practised medicine in Wales and fought as a Royalist trooper at Rowton Heath. His early love-poems are fluent but unremarkable; more interesting than his frequent addresses *To Amoret*—some of them very pretty of their kind—are his boldly shadowed and highly coloured satirical pieces, which seem to show the influence of the earlier Donne:

*Should we go now a wandering, we should meet
With catchpoles, whores and carts in every street:
Now when each narrow lane, each nook and cave,
Sign-posts, and shopdoors, pimp for every knave,
When riotous sinful plush, and tell-tale spurs,
Walk Fleet Street and the Strand, when the soft stirs
Of bawdy, ruffled silks, turn night to day,
And the loud whip and coach scolds all the way;*

*When lust of all sorts and each itchy blood,
From the Tower-wharf to Cymbeline and Lud,
Hunts for a mate, and the tired footman reels
'Twixt chairmen, torches and the hackney wheels. . . .*

His conversion was lasting and profound. By some miracle of inner metamorphosis, Vaughan discovered his own powers and became, in 1650, the author of *Silex Scintillans*. Thereafter, his work has a single purpose—the prolongation and literary intensification of those moments which, even for a mystic, are rare and brief, and of which the authenticity has nothing to do with the origin:

*God's silent, searching flight;
When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
His still, soft call;
His knocking-time; the soul's dumb watch,
When spirits their fair kindred catch.*

Vaughan is the most lyrical of devotional poets. While Traherne extends the interest or his theme—here and there, it must be admitted, somewhat mechanically—from the first to the last line of a long poem, Vaughan is apt to begin with a magnificent outburst which continues for half a page and dies away. He cannot better—hence is defeated by—a brilliant exordium:

*I saw eternity, the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright . . .*

More often, he produces a delightful image, complete in itself and musically perfect:

*Sure thou didst flourish once! and many springs,
 Many bright mornings, much dew, many showers,
 Passed o'er thy head; many light hearts and wings,
 Which now are dead, lodged in thy living bowers.
 And still a new succession sings and flies;
 Fresh groves grow up, and their green branches shoot
 Towards the old and still enduring skies,
 While the low violet thrives at their root,*

then destroys it in the search for its implications.

Vaughan shows a Wordsworthian love of nature. *The Timber*, quoted above, *The Shower*, *The Bird*:

*Hither thou com'st: the busy wind all night
 Blew through thy lodging, where thy own warm wing
 Thy pillow was . . .*

are figments of a real terrestrial landscape, seldom to be glimpsed in Crashaw's imagery. Donne, Herbert, Vaughan were men of the world; Crashaw, a celibate Cambridge fellow, whose piety took the form of painful vigils, inhabited an ecstatic private universe. "He led his life," we are told, "in St. Mary's Church, near St. Peter's College. There he lodged under Tertullian's roof of angels. There he made his nest more gladly than David's swallow near the House of God; where, like a primitive saint, he offered more prayers in the night than others usually offer in the day. There he penned these poems. . . ." But civil war drove him away from Oxford; he crossed the Channel, quitted the Anglican Church and died, disappointed, at Loretto.

Yet Crashaw was by no means a narrow sectarian. We hear that he had mastered five languages, and was proficient in music, painting and engraving. As a Jesuit apostle, he

might have been happy; one imagines him in Paraguay or at the Chinese court, devoting all his genius to the service of God, succumbing at last to an expected and grateful martyrdom. The spirit of the Counter Reformation, as it is expressed by the great monuments of Baroque architecture, gives his poems their exuberance and *brio*. Something of that sensuous and aspiring richness—all palms, vaulting angels and lavish drapery—breathes in the wonderful *Hymn to Saint Theresa*.

THE SHEPHERD BOY SINGS IN THE VALLEY
OF HUMILIATION

HE that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
Little be it or much:
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because Thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is
That go on pilgrimage:
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

From THE FLAMING HEART

O SWEET incendiary! show here thy art,
Upon this carcass of a hard, cold heart;
Let all thy scattered shafts of light, that play
Among the leaves of thy large books of day,
Combined against this breast, at once break in
And take away from me myself and sin!
This gracious robbery shall thy bounty be,
And my best fortunes such fair spoils of me.
O thou undaunted daughter of desires!
By all thy dower of lights and fires,
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove,
By all thy lives and deaths of love,
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they,
By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desire,
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire,
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seized thy parting soul and sealed thee His;
By all the heavens thou hast in Him,
Fair sister of the seraphim,
By all of Him we have in thee,
Leave nothing of myself in me!
Let me so read thy life that I
Unto all life of mine may die!

From A HYMN

To the name and honour of the admirable

Saint Theresa

O how oft shalt thou complain
Of a sweet and subtle pain;
Of intolerable joys;
Of a death in which who dies
Loves his death, and dies again,
And would forever so be slain;
And lives, and dies; and knows not why
To live but that he thus may never leave to die.

How kindly will thy gentle heart
Kiss the sweetly killing dart,
And close in his embraces keep
Those delicious wounds, that weep
Balsam to heal themselves with. Thus
When these thy deaths, so numerous,
Shall all at last die into one,
And melt thy soul's sweet mansion;
Like a soft lump of incense, hasted
By too hot a fire, and wasted
Into perfuming clouds, so fast
Shalt thou exhale to heaven at last
In a resolving sigh, and then
O what? Ask not the tongues of men.
Angels cannot tell; suffice
Thyself shall feel thy own full joys,
And hold them fast forever there.
So soon as you first appear,

The moon of maiden stars, thy white
Mistress, attended by such bright
Souls as thy shining self, shall come,
And in her first ranks make thee room;
Where 'mongst her snowy family
Immortal welcomes wait for thee. . . .

SONNET

At the round earth's imagined corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'er throw,
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance, hath slain, and you whose eyes
Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For, if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace,
When we are there; here on this lowly ground
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou'hadst sealed my pardon, with thy blood.

SONNET

BATTER my heart, three personed God; for you
As yet but knock, breath, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, 'and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to'another due,
Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly 'I love you, 'and would be lovèd fain,
But am betrothed unto your enemy:

Divorce me, 'untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you'enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

A HYMN TO GOD THE FATHER

WILT thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which is my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive those sins, through which I run,
And do run still: though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin by which I've won
Others to sin? and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowed in a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
Swear by thy self, that at my death thy son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I fear no more.

VERSA EST IN LUCTUM CYTHARA MEA

LOVE! I no orgies sing
Whereby thy mercies to invoke:
Nor from the east rich perfumes bring
To cloud thy altars with the precious smoke.

Nor while I did frequent
Those fanes by lovers raised to thee,
Did I loose heathenish rites invent,
To force a blush from injured chastity.

Religious was the charm
I used affection to intice:
And thought none burnt more bright or warm,
Yet chaste as winter was the sacrifice.

But now I thee bequeath
To the soft silken youths at court:
Who may their witty passions breathe,
To raise their mistress' smile, or make her sport.

They'll smooth thee into rhyme
Such as shall catch the wanton ear:
And win opinion with the time,
To make them a high sail of honour bear,

And may a powerful smile
Cherish their flatteries of wit!
While I my life of fame beguile,
And under my own vine uncourted sit.

For I have seen the pine
Famed for its travels o'er the sea:
Broken with storms and age decline,
And in some creek unpitied rot away.

I have seen cedars fall,
And in their room a mushroom grow:
I have seen comets, threatening all,
Vanish themselves: I have seen princes so.

Vain trivial dust! weak man!
Where is that virtue of thy breath,
That others save or ruin can,
When thou thyself art called to account by Death?

When I consider thee,
Thy scorn of time, and sport of fate,
How can I turn to jollity,
My ill-strung harp, and court the delicate?

How can I but disdain
The empty fallacies of mirth,
And in my midnight thoughts retain,
How high so e're I spread, my roots in earth?

Fond youth! too long I played
The wanton with a false delight;
Which, when I touched, I found a shade
That only wrought on the error of my sight.

Then, since pride doth betray
The soul to flattered ignorance,
I from the world will steal away,
And by humility my thoughts advance.

NOX NOCTI INDICAT SCIENTIAM

WHEN I survey the bright
Celestial sphere,
So rich with jewels hung, that night
Doth like an Ethiop bride appear,

My soul her wings doth spread,
And heavenward flies,
The Almighty's mysteries to read
In the large volumes of the skies.

For the bright firmament
Shoots forth no flame
So silent, but is eloquent
In speaking the Creator's name.

No unregarded star
Contracts its light
Into so small a character,
Removed far from our humane sight,

But if we steadfast look
We shall discern
In it, as in some holy book,
How man may heavenly knowledge learn.

It tells the conqueror,
That far-stretched power,
Which his proud dangers traffic for,
Is but the triumph of an hour.

That from the farthest north
Some nation may
Yet undiscovered issue forth,
And o'er his new got conquest sway.

Some nation yet shut in
With hills of ice
May be let out to scourge his sin,
Till they shall equal him in vice.

And then they likewise shall
Their ruin have;
For as yourselves your empires fall,
And every kingdom hath a grave.

Thus those celestial fires,
Though seeming mute,
The fallacy of our desires
And all the pride of life confute.

For they have watched since first
The world had birth,
And found sin in itself accurst,
And nothing permanent on earth.

THE COLLAR

I STRUCK the board, and cried, No more;

I will abroad.

What! Shall I ever sigh and pine?

My lines and life are free; free as the road,

Loose as the wind, as large as store;

Shall I be still in suit?

Have I no harvest but a thorn

To let me blood, and not restore

What I have lost with cordial fruit?

Sure there was wine

Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn

Before my tears did drown it.

Is the year only lost to me?

Have I no bays to crown it?

No flowers, no garlands gay? All blasted?

All wasted?

Not so, my heart; but there is fruit,

And thou hast hands.

Recover all thy sigh-blown age

On double pleasures; leave thy cold dispute

Of what is fit and not; forsake thy cage,

Thy rope of sands

Which petty thoughts have made; and made to thee

Good cable to enforce and draw

And be thy law,

While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.

Away! take heed;

I will abroad,

Call in thy death's-head there, tie up thy fears;

He that forbears

To suit and serve his need
Deserves his load.
But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methought I heard one calling, "Child";
And I replied, "My Lord".

THE PEARL

I KNOW the ways of Learning; both the head
And pipes that feed the press, and make it run;
What Reason hath from Nature borrowèd,
Or of itself, like a good huswife, spun
In laws and policy; what the stars conspire,
What willing Nature speaks, what forced by fire;
Both th' old discoveries and the new-found seas,
The stock and surplus, cause and history,
All these stand open, or I have the keys:
Yet I love Thee.

I know the ways of Honour, what maintains
The quick returns of courtesy and wit;
In vies of favour whether party gains;
When glory swells the heart, and mouldeth it
To all expressions both of hand and eye;
Which on the world a true-love knot may tie,
And bear the bundle, wheresoe'r it goes;
How many drams of spirit there must be
To sell my life unto my friends or foes:
Yet I love Thee.

I know the ways of Pleasure, the sweet strains,
The lullings and the relishes of it;
The propositions of hot blood and brains;
What mirth and music mean; what Love and Wit
Have done these twenty hundred years and more;
I know the projects of unbridled store:
My stuff is flesh, not brass; my senses live,
And grumble oft that they have more in me
Than He that curbs them, being but one to five:
Yet I love Thee.

I know all these, and have them in my hand:
Therefore not seelèd, but with open eyes
I flie to Thee, and fully understand
Both the main sale and the commodities;
And at what rate and price I have Thy love,
With all the circumstances that may move:
Yet through the labyrinths, not my grovelling wit,
But Thy silk-twist let down from heaven to me,
Did both conduct and teach me how by it
To climb to Thee.

JORDAN

Who says that fictions only and false hair
Become a verse? Is there in truth no beauty?
Is all good structure in a winding stair?
May no lines pass, except they do their duty
Not to a true, but painted chair?

Is it no verse, except enchanted groves
And sudden arbours shadow coarse-spun lines?
Must purling streams refresh a lover's loves?
Must all be veiled, while he that reads, divines,
Catching the sense at two removes?

Shepherds are honest people; let them sing:
Riddle who list, for me, and pull for prime:
I envy no man's nightingale or spring:
Nor let them punish me with loss of rhyme,
Who plainly say, *My God, My King.*

LOVE

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest", I answered, "worthy to be here."
Love said, "You shall be he".

"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my Dear,
I cannot look on Thee."

Love took my hand, and, smiling, did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."

"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My Dear, then I will serve."

"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

ETERNITY

O YEARS, and age, farewell!
Behold I go
Where I do know
Infinity to dwell.

And these mine eyes shall see
All times, how they
Are lost i' the sea
Of vast Eternity.

Where never moon shall sway
The stars; but she
And night, shall be
Drowned in one endless day.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S DEVOTION

SING aloud, his praise rehearse,
Who hath made the universe.
He the boundless heavens has spread,
All the vital orbs has kned;
He that on Olympus high
Tends his flocks with watchful eye,
And this eye has multiplied
'Midst each flock for to reside:
Thus as round about they stray,
Toucheth each with out-stretched ray;
Nimble they hold on their way,
Shaping out their night and day.
Summer, winter, autumn, spring,
Their inclinèd axes bring.
Never slack they; none respire,
Dancing round their central fires.
In due order as they move,
Echoes sweet be gently drove
Through heaven's vast hollowness,
Which unto all corners press:
Music that the heart of Jove
Moves to joy and sportful love;
Fills the listening sailors' ears
Riding on the wandering spheres.
Neither speech nor language is
Where their voice is not transmiss.
God is good, is wise, is strong,
Witness all the creature-throng,
Is confessed by every tongue:
All things back from whence they sprung,

As the thankful rivers pay
What they borrowed of the sea.

Now myself I do resign;
Take me whole, I all am thine,
Save me, God! from self-desire,
Death's pit, dark hell's raging fire,
Envy, hatred, vengeance, ire,
Let not lust my soul bemire.

Quit from these, thy praise I'll sing,
Loudly sweep the trembling string.
Bear a part, O wisdom's sons!
Freed from vain religions.
Lo! from far I you salute,
Sweetly warbling on my lute,
Indie, Egypt, Araby,
Asia, Greece, and Tartary,
Carmel-tracts and Lebanon,
With the Mountains of the Moon,
From whence muddy Nile doth run,
Or wherever else you won;
Breathing in one vital air,
One we are, though distant far.

Rise at once, let's sacrifice,
Odours sweet perfume the skies,
See how heavenly lightning fires
Hearts inflamed with high aspires!
All the substance of our souls
Up in clouds of incense rolls;
Leave we nothing to ourselves
Save a voice, what need we else?
Or an hand to wear and tire
On the thankful lute or lyre.

Sing aloud, his praise rehearse,
Who hath made the universe.

THE SOUL'S GARMENT

GREAT Nature clothes the soul, which is but thin,
With fleshly garments, which the Fates do spin,
And when these garments are grown old and bare,
With sickness torn, Death takes them off with care,
And folds them up in peace and quiet rest,
And lays them safe within an earthly chest:
Then scours them well and makes them sweet and clean,
Fit for the soul to wear those clothes again.

THE ASPIRATION

How long, great God, how long must I
Immured in this dark prison lie,
Where, at the grates and avenues of sense,
My soul must watch to have intelligence;
Where but faint gleams of Thee salute my sight,
Like doubtful moonshine in a cloudy night?
When shall I leave this magic sphere,
And be all mind, all eye, all ear?

How cold this clime! and yet my sense
Perceives even here Thy influence.
Even here Thy strong magnetic charms I feel,
And pant and tremble like the amorous steel.
To lower good, and beauties less divine,
Sometimes my erroneous needle does decline;
But yet, so strong the sympathy,
It turns, and points again to Thee.

I long to see this excellence
Which at such distance strikes my sense.
My impatient soul struggles to disengage
Her wings from the confinement of her cage.
Wouldst Thou, great Love, this prisoner once set free,
How would she hasten to be linked to Thee!
She'd for no angel conduct stay,
But fly, and love on all the way.

CANTICLES II. 5

*Stay Me with flowers, and Comfort Me
with Apples, for I Am Sick with Love*

I

O TYRANT love! how doth thy sovereign power
Subject poor souls to thy imperious thrall?
They say thy cup's composed of sweet and sour;
They say thy diet's honey mixed with gall;
How comes it then to pass, these lips of ours
Still trade in bitter; taste no sweet at all?
O tyrant love! shall our perpetual toil
Ne'er find a sabbath to refresh awhile
Our drooping souls? Art thou all frowns, and ne'er a smile?

2

You blessed maids of honour that frequent
The royal courts of our renowned Jehove,
With flowers restore my spirits faint and spent;
O fetch me apples from love's fruitful grove
To cool my palate and renew my scent,
For I am sick, for I am sick of love:
These will revive my dry, my wasted powers,
And they will sweeten my unsavoury hours;

3

O bring me apples to assuage that fire,
Which Etna-like inflames my flaming breast;
Nor is it every apple I desire,
Nor that which pleases every palate best:

'Tis not the lasting Deuzan I require,
Nor yet the red-cheeked Queening I request;¹
Nor that which first beshrewed the name of wife,
Nor that whose beauty caused the golden strife;
No, no, bring me an apple from the tree of life.

4

Virgins, tuck up your silken laps, and fill ye
With the fair wealth of Flora's magazine;
The purple violet and the pale-faced lily;
The pansy and the organ columbine;
The flowering thyme, the gilt-bowl daffadilly;
The lowly pink, the lofty eglantine:
The blushing rose, the queen of flowers, and best
Of Flora's beauty; but above the rest,
Let Jesse's sovereign flower perfume my qualming breast.

5

Haste, virgins, haste, for I lie weak and faint,
Beneath the pangs of love; why stand ye mute,
As if your silence neither cared to grant,
Nor yet your language to deny my suit?
No key can lock the door of my complaint,
Until I smell this flower, or taste that fruit;
Go, virgins, seek this tree, and search that bower;
Oh, how my soul shall bless that happy hour,
That brings to me such fruit, that brings me such a flower.

¹ The rusticity of Quarles' religious symbolism is in strange contrast to the erudite fervour of Crashaw and Vaughan.

AND SHE WASHED HIS FEET

*With her Tears, and wiped them with the
Hairs of her Head*

THE proud Egyptian queen, her Roman guest,
(To express her love in height of state and pleasure)
With pearl dissolved in gold, did feast,
Both food and treasure.

And now, dear Lord, thy lover, on the fair
And silver tables of thy feet, behold!
Pearl in her tears, and in her hair
Offers thee gold.

THE SALUTATION

I

THESE little limbs,
These eyes and hands which here I find,
These rosy cheeks wherewith my life begins,
Where have ye been? behind
What curtain were ye from me hid so long,
Where was, in what abyss, my speaking tongue?

II

When silent I
So many thousand, thousand years
Beneath the dust did in a chaos lie,
How could I smiles or tears
Or lips or hands or eyes or ears perceive?
Welcome ye treasures which I now receive.

III

I that so long
Was nothing from eternity,
Did little think such joys as ear or tongue
To celebrate or see:
Such sounds to hear, such hands to feel, such feet,
Beneath the skies on such a ground to meet.

IV

New burnished joys!
Which yellow gold and pearls excel!
Such sacred treasures are the limbs in boys,
In which a soul doth dwell;
Their organized joints and azure veins
More wealth include than all the world contains.

V

From dust I rise,
And out of nothing now awake,
These brighter regions which salute mine eyes,
A gift from God I take.
The earth, the seas, the light, the day, the skies,
The sun and stars are mine; if those I prize.

VI

Long time before
I in my mother's womb was born,
A God preparing did this glorious store,
The world for me adorn.
Into this Eden so divine and fair,
So wide and bright, I come His son and heir.

VII

A stranger here
Strange things doth meet, strange glories see;
Strange treasures lodged in this fair world appear,
Strange all and new to me;
But that they mine should be, who nothing was,
That strangest is of all, yet brought to pass.

EDEN

I

A LEARNED and a happy ignorance
Divided me
From all the vanity,
From all the sloth, care, pain, and sorrow that advance
The madness and the misery
Of men. No error, no distraction I
Saw soil the earth or overcloud the sky.

II

I knew not that there was a serpent's sting,
Whose poison shed
On men, did overspread
The world; nor did I dream of such a thing
As sin, in which mankind lay dead.
They all were brisk and living wights to me,
Yea, pure and full of immortality.

III

Joy, pleasure, beauty, kindness, glory, love,
Sleep, day, life, light,
Peace, melody, my sight,
My ears and heart did fill and freely move.
All that I saw did me delight.
The universe was then a world of treasure,
To me a universal world of pleasure.

IV

Unwelcome penitence was then unknown,
Vain costly toys,
Swearing and roaring boys,
Shops, markets, taverns, coaches, were unshown;
So all things were that drowned my joys:
No thorns choked up my path, nor hid the face
Of bliss and beauty, nor eclipsed the place.

V

Only what Adam in his first estate,
Did I behold;
Hard silver and dry gold
As yet lay under ground; my blessed fate
Was more acquainted with the old
And innocent delights which he did see
In his original simplicity.

VI

Those things which first his Eden did adorn
My infancy
Did crown. Simplicity
Was my protection when I first was born.
Mine eyes those treasures first did see
Which God first made. The first effects of love
My first enjoyments upon earth did prove.

VII

And were so great, and so divine, so pure,
 So fair and sweet,
 So true; when I did meet
Them here at first, they did my soul allure,
 And drew away my infant feet
Quite from the works of men; that I might see
The glorious wonders of the Deity.

DESIRE

I

For giving me desire,
An eager thirst, a burning ardent fire,
 A virgin infant flame,
A love with which into the world I came,
 An inward hidden heavenly love,
 Which in my soul did work and move,
 And ever ever me inflame,
With restless longing, heavenly avarice,
 That never could be satisfied,
That did incessantly a Paradise
Unknown suggest, and something undescried
 Discern, and bear me to it; be
 Thy name for ever praised by me.

II

My parched and withered bones
Burnt up did seem: my soul was full of groans:
My thoughts extensions were;
Like paces, reaches, steps they did appear:
They somewhat hotly did pursue,
Knew that they had not all their due,
Nor ever quiet were:
But made my flesh like hungry, thirsty ground,
My heart a deep profound abyss,
And every joy and pleasure but a wound,
So long as I my blessedness did miss.
O happiness! A famine burns,
And all my life to anguish turns!

III

Where are the silent streams,
The living waters and the glorious beams,
The sweet reviving bowers,
The shady groves, the sweet and curious flowers,
The springs and trees, the heavenly days,
The flowery meads, and glorious rays,
The gold and silver towers?
Alas! all these are poor and empty things!
Trees, waters, days, and shining beams,
Fruits, flowers, bowers, shady groves and springs,
No joy will yield, no more than silent streams;
Those are but dead material toys,
And cannot make my heavenly joys.

IV

O love! Ye amities,
And friendships that appear above the skies!
Ye feasts and living pleasures!
Ye senses, honours, and imperial treasures!
Ye bridal joys! ye high delights
That satisfy all appetites!
Ye sweet affections, and
Ye high respects! Whatever joys there be
In triumphs, whatsoever stand
In amicable sweet society,
Whatever pleasures are at His right hand,
Ye must before I am divine,
In full propriety be mine.

V

This soaring, sacred thirst,
Ambassador of bliss, approachèd first,
Making a place in me
That made me apt to prize, and taste, and see.
For not the objects but the sense
Of things doth bliss to souls dispense,
And make it, Lord, like Thee.
Sense, feeling, taste, complacency, and sight,
These are the true and real joys,
The living, flowing, inward, melting, bright,
And heavenly pleasures; all the rest are toys:
All which are founded in desire,
As light in flame and heat in fire.

MAN

WEIGHING the steadfastness and state
Of some mean things which here below reside,
Where birds, like watchful clocks, the noiseless date
And intercourse of times divide,
Where bees at night get home and hive, and flowers,
Early as well as late,
Rise with the sun and set in the same bowers;

I would—said I—my God would give
The staidness of these things to man! for these
To His divine appointments ever cleave,
And no new business breaks their peace;
The birds nor sow nor reap, yet sup and dine;
The flowers without clothes live,
Yet Solomon was never dressed so fine.

Man hath still either toys or care;
He hath no root, nor to one place is tied,
But ever restless and irregular
About this earth doth run and ride.
He knows he hath a home, but scarce knows where;
He says it is so far
That he hath quite forgot how to go there.

He knocks at all doors, strays and roams,
Nay, hath not so much wit as some stones have,
Which in the darkest nights point to their homes,
By some hid sense their Maker gave;
Man is the shuttle, to whose winding quest
And passage through these looms
God ordered motion, but ordained no rest.

THE FLOWER

I WALKED the other day, to spend my hour,
 Into a field
Where I sometimes had seen the soil to yield
 A gallant flower;
But winter now had ruffled all the bower
 And curious store
I knew there heretofore.

Yet I, whose search loved not to peep and peer
 I' the face of things,
Thought with myself, there might be other springs
 Besides this here,
Which, like cold friends, sees us but once a year;
 And so the flower
Might have some other bower.

Then taking up what I could nearest spy,
 I digged about
That place where I had seen him to grow out;
 And by and by
I saw the warm recluse alone to lie,
 Where, fresh and green,
He lived of us unseen.

Many a question intricate and rare
 Did I there strow;
But all I could extort was that he now
 Did there repair
Such losses as befell him in this air,
 And would ere long
Come forth most fair and young.

This past, I threw the clothes quite o'er his head;
And, stung with fear
Of my own frailty, dropped down many a tear
Upon his bed;
Then, sighing, whispered, "Happy are the dead!
What peace doth now
Rock him asleep below!"

And yet, how few believe such doctrine springs
From a poor root,
Which all the winter sleeps here under foot,
And hath no wings
To raise it to the truth and light of things;
But is still trod
By every wandering clod.

O Thou! whose spirit did at first inflame
And warm the dead,
And by a sacred incubation fed
With life this frame,
Which once had neither being, form, nor name,
Grant I may so
Thy steps track here below.

That in these masques and shadows I may see
Thy sacred way;
And by those hid ascents climb to that day
Which breaks from Thee,
Who art in all things, though invisibly;
Show me Thy peace,
Thy mercy, love, and ease.

And from this care, where dreams and sorrows reign,
 Lead me above,
Where light, joy, leisure, and true comforts move
 Without all pain;
There, hid in Thee, show me his life again
 At whose dumb urn
Thus all the year I mourn!

THE MORNING-WATCH

O joys! infinite sweetness! with what flowers
And shoots of glory, my soul breaks and buds!
 All the long hours
 Of night and rest,
 Through the still shrouds
 Of sleep and clouds,
This dew fell on my breast;
 O how it bloods,
And spirits all my earth! hark! in what rings,
And hymning circulations the quick world
 Awakes and sings!
 The rising winds,
 And falling springs,
 Birds, beasts, all things
Adore Him in their kinds;
 Thus all is hurled
 In sacred hymns and order; the great chime
And symphony of Nature. Prayer is
 The world in tune,
 A spirit-voice
 And vocal joys

Whose echo is heaven's bliss.
O let me climb
When I lie down! The pious soul by night
Is like a clouded star, whose beams, though said
To shed their light
Under some cloud,
Yet are above,
And shine and move
Beyond that misty shroud.
So in my bed,
That curtained grave, though sleep, like ashes, hide
My lamp and life, both shall in Thee abide.

THE RETREAT

HAPPY those early days, when I
Shined in my angel infancy;
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy aught
But a white, celestial thought;
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first Love,
And looking back, at that short space,
Could see a glimpse of His bright face;
When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My conscience with a sinful sound,
Or had the black art to dispense
A several sin to every sense,

But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

O, how I long to travel back,
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain
Where first I left my glorious train,
From whence the enlightened spirit sees
That shady city of palm trees;
But ah, my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way.
Some men a forward motion love;
But, I by backward steps would move,
And when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came, return.

THEY ARE ALL GONE INTO THE WORLD OF LIGHT

THEY are all gone into the world of light!
And I alone sit lingering here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast
Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
Or those faint beams in which this hill is dressed
After the sun's remove.

I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days;
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays.

O holy hope and high humility,
High as the heavens above!
These are your walks, and you have showed them me
To kindle my cold love.

Dear, beauteous death! the jewel of the just,
Shining nowhere but in the dark,
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
Could man outlook that mark!

He that hath found some fledged bird's nest may know
At first sight if the bird be flown;
But what fair well or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.

And yet, as angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul when man doth sleep,
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,
And into glory peep.

If a star were confined into a tomb,
Her captive flames must needs burn there;
But when the hand that locked her up gives room,
She'll shine through all the sphere.

O Father of eternal life, and all
Created glories under Thee!
Resume Thy spirit from this world of thrall
Into true liberty.

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
My perspective still as they pass,
Or else remove me hence unto that hill
Where I shall need no glass.

YET IF HIS MAJESTY

YET if his Majesty our Sovereign Lord
Should of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say, "I'll be your guest to-morrow night,"
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work! "Let no man idle stand!
Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall,
See they be fitted all;
Let there be room to eat,
And order taken that there want no meat!
See every sconce and candlestick made bright
That without tapers they may give a light!
Look to the presence: are the carpets spread,
The dais o'er the head,
The cushions in the chairs,
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?
Perfume the chambers, and in any case
Let each man give attendance in his place."

Thus if the king were coming would we do,
And 'twere good reason too;
For 'tis a duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
And after all our travail and our cost,
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.
But at the coming of the King of Heaven
All's set at six and seven:
We wallow in our sin,
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn.
We entertain Him always like a stranger,
And, as at first, still lodge Him in the manger.

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Printed at
The Westminster Press
411a Harrow Road
London, W.9

27296

F. 4.

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